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CLARK'S FIELD

BY

ROBERT HERRICK

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge
1914

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Published June 1914

CLARK'S FIELD

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CLARK'S FIELD

THE other day I happened to be in the town where I was born and not far from the commonplace house in the humbler quarter of the town where my parents were living at the time of my birth, half a century and more ago. I am not fond of my native town, although I lived in the place until I was seventeen or eighteen years old. It was never a distinguished spot and seems to have gained nothing as yet from having been my birthplace. It has some reputation of its own, however, but that is due to the enduring popularity of a certain cookstove that has long been manufactured there, the "Stearns and Frost Cooker," known to many housewives of several generations. In my youth the Stearns and Frost stove works were reputed to be the largest in the world, and most of the plain citizens of Alton were concerned in one way or another with them. I do not happen to be interested in the manufacture or sale, or I may add the use, of the domestic cookstove. As a boy I always thought the town a dull, ugly sort of place, and although it has grown marvelously these last thirty years, having been completely surrounded and absorbed by the neighboring city of B——, it did not seem to me that day when I revisited it to have grown perceptibly in grace. . . .

Having a couple of spare hours before meeting a dinner engagement, I descended into a subway and was shot out in less than ten minutes from the heart of the city to the old "Square" of Alton, — a journey that took us formerly from half to three quarters of an hour, and in cold or rainy weather, of which there is a good deal in Alton, seemed truly interminable. From the "Square," which no longer had the noble amplitude of my memory, the direct way to Fuller Place lay up the South Road, — a broad thoroughfare, through the center of which there used to trickle occasionally a tiny horse-drawn vehicle to and from the great city of B——. South Road, I found, had changed its name to the more pompous designation of State Avenue, and it was noisy and busy enough to accord with my childish imagination of it, but none too large for the mammoth moving-vans in which the electric railroad now transported the inhabitants. These shot by me in bewildering numbers. I had chosen to make the rest of my journey on foot, trying leisurely to revive old memories and sensations. For a few blocks I succeeded in picking out here and there a familiar object, but by the time I reached the cross-street where we used to descend from the street-cars and penetrate the lane that led to Fuller Place I was completely at sea. The ample wooden houses fronting the South Road, each surrounded by its green lawn with appropriate shrubbery, had all given way before the march of brick business blocks. Even the

"Reformed Methodist" church on the corner of Lamb Street had been replaced by a stone structure that discreetly concealed its denominational quality from the passer-by. Beyond the church there had been a half-mile of unoccupied land fronting on the Road, but now the line of "permanent improvements" ran unbroken as far as the eye could see. Into this maze of unfamiliar buildings I plunged and wandered at random for half an hour through blocks of brick stores, office buildings, factories, tenements, — chiefly tenements it seemed to me. Off in one corner of the district instead of high tenement buildings there was something almost worse, rows of mean, little two-story brick cottages that ranged upwards along a gentle slope that I tried to fancy was Swan's Hill, — a dangerous descent where my older brothers and I were once allowed to coast on our "double-runner." I will not weary the reader with further details of my wandering with its disappointment and shattered illusions, which can in no way be of interest to any but the one in search of his past, and of purely sentimental importance to him. It is, of course, a common form of egotism to chronicle such small-beer of one's origin, but it happens to have nothing to do with my purpose.

Enough to say that at last I discovered Fuller Place, — a mean, little right-angled street that led nowhere; but from one end to the other I could not find my old home. Its site must now be occu-

pied by one of those ugly five-story apartment boxes that spring like weeds in old towns and cities. As I lingered in front of the brick wall that I judged must very nearly cover the site of my birthplace, I tried to understand the sensation of utter unfamiliarity with which the whole place filled me. The answer came to me in a flash as I turned away from Fuller Place, — Clark's Field no longer existed! Its place was completely filled by the maze of brick and mortar in which for the better part of an hour I had lost myself. There was nothing surprising that after a third of a century a large, vacant field should have been carved up into streets, alleys, and lots, and be covered with buildings to house the growing population of a city. It is one of the usual commonplaces in our American cities and towns. But to me the total disappearance of Clark's Field seemed momentous. That large, open tract near my old home had more significance, at least in memory, than the home itself. It was intricately interwoven with all the imaginative and more personal life that I had known as a boy. One corner of the irregular open land known as Clark's Field had abutted my father's small property in Fuller Place, and I and my older brothers and our friends had taken advantage of this fact to open an unauthorized entrance into the Field through the board fence in the rear yard. Over that fence lay freedom from parental control and family tasks, and there was also, it happened, a certain bed of luscious strawberries which we regularly

looted until the market gardener, who at the time leased this corner of Clark's Field, resigned himself to the inevitable and substituted winter cabbages for the strawberries, — a crop he had never been able to get to market.

From the gardener's beds and small forcing-houses the land stretched away unbroken by cultivation or building to that Swan's Hill where we coasted and farther to the suburban estates of several affluent citizens, — I presume the homes of Stearns and Frost of stove fame and others no longer remembered. These places, with their stately trees and greenhouses and careful lawns, have also been merged into the domain of brick and mortar and concrete. To the right of the market garden, between us and the South Road, lay the level, treeless tract, about fifty acres in extent, which was specifically known as Clark's Field, although all the unused land in the neighborhood had originally belonged to the Clark farm. The Field was carefully fenced in with high white palings, — too high for a small boy to climb safely in a hurry. Certain large signs, at the different corners, averred that the Field was for sale and would be divided into suitable lots for building purposes, and also that trespassers were so little desired that they would be prosecuted by law. These signs were regularly defaced with stones and snowballs according to season, and were as regularly rëerected every spring by the hopeful owner or his agent. For in spite of its difficult paling and

warning signs, Clark's Field remained our favorite ball-field and recreation spot where in summer we dug caves and skated when the autumn rains were obliging enough to come before the frost. I suppose that we destroyed the signs as a point of honor, and preferred Clark's Field to all the other open land free to us because we could see no reason for the prohibition. At any rate, we "trespassed" upon it at all hours of day and night, and many a time have I ripped my clothes on the sharp points of those palings in my breathless haste to escape some real or fancied pursuit by one in authority. We had not only the regular police—the "cops"—to contend with, but we believed that old man Clark employed private watchmen and even descended to the mean habit of sneaking about the Field himself, peering through the close palings to snare us. There must have been some fire in all this smoke of memory, for I distinctly recall one occasion that resulted disastrously to me and has left with me such a vivid picture that its origin must have been real. I was one of the younger and less athletic of our gang and had been nabbed by the fat policeman on our beat and led ignominiously through the streets of Alton by the collar of my coat, — not to the police station in the "Square," nor to my father's house where my older brothers had often been brought in similar disgrace. This time the policeman, with the ingenuity of a Persian cadi, took me through the public streets direct to headquarters, — the home of Mr. Samuel Clark.

It was, I believe, the only occasion on which I ever met the owner of Clark's Field, certainly the only time I ever had speech with him; not that there was much speech from me then. As I was reluctantly urged up the long graveled drive of the respectable wooden house near the Square, I saw an old, white-haired man getting into his family carriage with some difficulty. The large, heavy person of the owner of Clark's Field seemed to me a very formidable object when he turned upon me a pair of dark, scowling eyes beneath bushy white brows and muttered something about "bad boys." Those eyes and a curious trembling of the heavy limbs — due to palsy, I suppose — are the only things I recollect of Samuel Clark. Nor do I remember what he said to me beyond calling me a bad boy or what judgment he meted out. All I know is that I returned home without visiting the "lockup" behind the Square and became the subject of a protracted and animated family discussion. My mother, unexpectedly, took my part, inveighing against the "ogre" of a Clark who deprived "nice" boys of the enjoyment of his useless field, and urged my father, who had some acquaintance with fact as well as with law, to "do something about Clark's Field." My father, I think, was at last persuaded to visit the owner of the field to see what lawful arrangements could be made so that well-behaved boys might freely and honorably use the Field for their pleasure, until it should be disposed of to builders. (Which, of

course, would have taken from it every shred of charm!) Whether in fact he made some such arrangement I cannot remember, nor whether having been once caught I was sufficiently intimidated by my visit to old Clark. All I know is that as long as we remained in Alton, the Field continued its useless, forlorn, unoccupied existence, jealously surrounded by a dilapidated though constantly patched fence, with its numerous signs inviting prospective purchasers to consult with the "owner" — signs that were regularly destroyed by succeeding generations of boys. Already in my youth the busy town was growing far beyond Clark's Field, along the South Road towards the new railroad station; but the Field remained in dreary isolation from all this new life until long after I had left the town.

As I have said, this empty field of fifty acres was the most permanent experience of my youth. Its large, level surface, so persistently offered to unwilling purchasers of real estate, seized hold of my boyish imagination. I invented mysterious reasons for its condition, which as time went on must have been influenced by what I heard at the family table of the Clarks and their possessions. Now it is all inextricably woven in my memory into a web of fact and fancy. The Field stood for me during those fertile years as the physical symbol of the unknown, the mysterious,—the source of adventure and legend, — long, long after I had outgrown childish imaginings and had become fully involved in what we like

to call the serious matters of life. To-day I had but to close my eyes and think of Fuller Place and my boyhood there to see that lonely field, jealously hedged about by its fence of tall white palings, — see it in all its former emptiness and mystery.

Of Clark's Field and the Clarks I mused as I retraced my way through the maze of living that had been planted upon the old open land. All this close-packed brick and mortar, these dull streets and high business buildings, had been crowded man-fashion into the free, wind-swept field of my fancy. Five thousand people at least must now be living and largely have their being on our old playground, — a small town in itself. And the change had come about in the last fifteen years or less. How had it been brought to pass? Why after all the years of idleness that it had endured had a use for Clark's Field been found? Something must have broken that spell which had effectually restrained prospective purchasers of real estate through all the years when the city was pressing on beyond this point far away into the country. . . . The facts are not all dime-novelish, but very human and significant, and by chance the main thread of the real story of Clark's Field came to my knowledge shortly after my visit, correcting and enlarging the impressions I had formed from family gossip, the talk of playmates, and my own imagination. And this story — the story of Clark's Field — I deem well worth setting forth. . . .

That same evening, when I entered the city hotel where I was to dine, I found my friend walking impatiently up and down the lobby, for in my search for the past I had forgotten my engagement and was late. Scarcely greeting my guest, I burst out, —

"Edsall, do you remember Clark's Field?" (For Edsall had once lived in Alton, though not in my part of the town.)

"Yes," he replied, somewhat surprised by my breathless eagerness. "What about it?"

"I want to know what happened to it and why?"

Edsall, being a lawyer with a special interest in real estate, could tell me many of the known facts about the Clark property over which there had been some curious litigation. So the story grew that evening over our dinner, to be filled in later by many details that came to me unexpectedly, — I suppose because I was interested in the fate of Clark's Field.

I

THE Clarks, as their name implies, were of common English blood, originally of some clerkly tribe and so possessing no distinctive patronymic. These Clarks were ordinary Yankee farmers, who had been settled in one place for upwards of two hundred years. Very likely some ancestor of my old Samuel Clark had stood at Concord with "the embattled farmers." I know not. He easily could have done so, for Alton was not many miles distant from the battle field. But little either spiritual or militant fervor from these Puritan ancestors seems to have come down to Samuel, who in 1860 occupied the family farm of one hundred and forty acres, "more or less," according to the loose description of old deeds. Samuel, indeed, had not enough patriotism to sympathize with his son, John Parsons, who finally ran off to the war, as so many boys did, to escape the monotony of farm life. For Samuel, his father, was a plain, ordinary, selfish, and not very thrifty New England farmer, who laid down his fields every year to the same crops of oats and rye and hay, kept a few sheep and hogs and cows, and in the easy, shiftless way of his kind drained the soil of his old farm, with the narrow consolation that it would somehow last his time.

So little ambition he had that shortly after his son went to the war, thus depriving him of free labor, he "retired" from his farm, — that is, he sold what he could of its fields and pastures and bought himself a house on Church Street near the Square in Alton, probably the same house where I was taken for my one interview with him. What he did not sell of the farm he rented to another more energetic farmer, one Everitt Adams, the old market-gardener whom I remembered. Adams with more thrift and the great incentive of necessity built hothouses and went in for market-gardening to supply the wants of the neighboring city, which was already making itself felt upon the surrounding country. Hence the long rows of celery, cabbage, lettuce, and peas that I remember across my father's back fence. All the near-by farmers were doing much the same thing, turning the better part of their land into gardens. They would start before dawn in summer time for the city, making their way along the South Road, which was the main thoroughfare into this part of the country. Many a time have I seen their covered wagons returning from the city about the time when I was starting for school, the horses wearily plodding along at a walk, the farmer or his boy asleep in the wagon on his empty crates.

I don't know what sort of an arrangement old Clark made with his tenant, but Adams, who was a hard-working fellow with a tribe of strong children, must have found the business profitable, espe-

cially after he built the forcing-houses and began to supply unseasonable luxuries to the prosperous citizens of B——. Prices ran high in the years of the great war, and those farmers who stayed at home and cultivated their gardens industriously made money at every turn. At any rate, it was common knowledge in the neighborhood of Fuller Place that Everitt Adams wished to purchase Clark's Field from its owner — the last piece of the old farm that he had not hitherto disposed of — and had the money to pay for it in the River Savings Bank. Indeed, gossip said that the price was agreed upon, — five thousand dollars, — which was considered a fair price in those days for fifty acres, six or seven miles from the city. And Samuel Clark, so tradition also says, was anxious to sell his last field for that price. His son had returned from the war wounded and incapable of work, and his father wanted to set him up in a small shop in the Square. The son, in spite of his invalidism, married shortly after his return from the ranks and this made the need of ready money in the Church Street house all the more urgent.

Trouble came when the lawyer employed by the market-gardener discovered what old Clark must have known all the time, and that is that the Field had a cloud upon its title, or rather an absolute restriction which would render worthless any title that Samuel might give alone. To explain this legal obstacle we must go back before the war and my

day into the previous generation. There had been a family quarrel between Samuel and his older brother, which had resulted finally in Edward Stanley — the elder son — going off to seek his fortunes in the new West, which was attracting young men from the East at that time. This was in 1840 or thereabouts when Edward S. left his father's home in Alton, and nothing more had been heard of him except the vague report from some other exile from Alton that he had been seen in Chicago where he had become a carpenter, and it was said had married. Probably Samuel, who was then a young man and recently married with two little children, had no great desire to have his elder brother's existence recalled to his father. Everything I have learned about Samuel confirms the impression of him I had as a boy, that he was not the kind of man whose conscience would be sensitive in such matters. He probably considered that his brother Ed, having taken his fate in his hands, should expect nothing from the more timid members of the family who had stuck by the old farm. But when the elder Clark died, a will was found in which to Samuel's disgust an undivided half interest in the Field — the best part of the farm — was left to his eldest son and his heirs.

There is no evidence that Samuel, at the time of his father's death, ever took any measures, even of the most casual sort, to hunt up this elder brother or find out if he had left any children. He made some

sort of deal with a younger brother who could not be ignored and continued to work the old farm, living in his father's house on Swan's Hill. Probably a long term of undisturbed possession of the farm convinced him that he was the sole legitimate owner of the property, that the land was absolutely and wholly his to do with what he would. And so, as we have seen, in his old age he tried to dispose of the Field to the market-gardener for five thousand dollars. But the lawyer raised the obvious objection that the Field could not be sold without Edward's consent, and of Edward nothing whatsoever was known. Some attempt was made at this time by John Clark on behalf of his father to trace the missing Edward—a feeble attempt. He wrote to an army friend in Chicago, who found evidence that Edward S. Clark, a carpenter, had lived in the city for five or six years and had moved thence to St. Louis. No trace of him could be found in St. Louis, where John also wrote to the postmaster. At that time, it should be remembered, St. Louis was the port of departure for the little-known West, and possibly Edward and his family had taken boat up the Missouri and gone on to the distant gold fields or had merely drifted out into the neighboring prairie country and stuck in some nook. It was all speculation. Nothing further of Edward Stanley Clark was ever known by either Samuel or his son John. He never announced himself to his Eastern relatives.

But Samuel could not sell the Field. Old Adams

was altogether too shrewd to spend five thousand dollars upon a property that had such an uncertainty about its title, and in those days the lawyers whose advice they were able to get could not suggest a satisfactory way of evading the difficulty. No such thing as a title guaranty company had ever been heard of in the old Commonwealth of M——. There was nothing to do but wait in the hope that either information about Edward S. would be forthcoming some day or that in time the law could be invoked to gloss over the title. But Samuel, in hope of inducing some gullible purchaser to run the risk, had the Field carefully fenced and put signs upon it. For he needed the money, and needed it more as the years went by and John's invalidism turned into chronic laziness and incapacity for earning a livelihood. Everitt Adams moved away after a time and his successors who leased the Field were never satisfactory. There were taxes and assessments to be met, which grew all the time with the rising value of adjacent land, as well as lawyer's fees. The income from the small part of the Field now under cultivation was hardly adequate to meet these, and after a time this income ceased altogether and the Field became an absolute burden. For nobody seemed willing either to rent or buy the property.

Of course, the son John, if he had had the energy, might have followed old Adams's example and worked the Field for a time, until the gas and sewer mains had corrupted the soil and spoiled it for market

gardening. But he preferred to rely upon his record as an old soldier and secured a small clerkship in the Alton Gas Company, and some years later obtained a pension. Of course, all this trouble with the Field supplied both him and his father with ample cause for grumbling. Samuel had never liked his brother Edward, who seemed almost spitefully to be turning this trick against him in his old age, and he handed on his grievance to John and his wife. The small, wooden house in Church Street contained a narrow, ungracious family life, it can be seen, of petty economies and few interests. No wonder that the Field — the one important family possession remaining — became the favorite topic of discussion and speculation. The city was growing fast, and Alton was already its most considerable suburb. The lines of modern life had crept up to within call of the old Field before the death of Samuel. So the old fellow was not indulging in much exaggeration when he bragged towards the end that he would n't take twenty-five thousand dollars for his property, although ten years earlier he had been eager to sell for five thousand dollars!

That twenty-five thousand dollars, however, was as far away as the five thousand, and the life in the Church Street house was more penurious and uncomfortable than it had ever been on the old farm, which had provided a coarse plenty for many generations. The Clarks were obviously running out, and when the old man died in 1882 he must have had the

bitter consciousness that the family destiny had dwindled in his hands. From being prosperous and respected farmers, living on their own land in their ancestral square wooden house with its one enormous chimney, they were living in real poverty in a small house on a dusty side street off the noisy Square, which was not what it had once been as a place of residence. And they did not even own this Church Street house — merely clung to it from inertia and bad habit. The only thing they did own was Clark's Field, and Mrs. John sometimes thought it would be better if that had gone the way of the rest of the Clark farm, so insidious was its moral influence upon the men as well as costly in the way of outgo....

If a man's accomplishment in this life is to be reckoned by the substantial gains he has made on his father's estate and condition, old Samuel Clark had nothing to be proud of when he was borne to his grave in the new cemetery a mile south of Clark's Field. He had left nothing to his children but the Field, encumbered with the undivided and indivisible half interest belonging to his brother Edward Stanley, were he alive at this date, and to his heirs if he had any.

II

THE possession of property of any kind gives a curious consciousness of dignity to the human being who is its owner, due very likely to the traditional estimate of the importance of all possessions, and to the mystical but generally erroneous belief that property is in some way an outward and visible proof of the worth or the ability of its possessor — or his forbears. Even the possession of a possibility such as Clark's Field — which was of no positive value to the Clarks, and indeed an increasing source of expense and anxiety to the impoverished family, as taxes rose in company with the rise of all values — conferred upon the Clarks some small consideration in Alton and made them feel the dignity and the tragedy of property ownership. John, who was nothing but a seedy, middle-aged clerk, none too careful of his appearance and uneasily aware of his failure, had ample excuse to himself for his shortcomings and willingness to live on a kind Government, because he had been hardly used by fate in the matter of his inheritance. As the property that might have been his was just beyond his reach, he had a small swagger of superiority in the gas office, and the tradition was well established there that he belonged to a family "land poor," — the most genteel

form of poverty if any form of poverty can be genteel. Even old farmer Samuel had tottered about the Square on his malacca stick and exchanged the time of day with the small merchants there, with a sense of his own importance as the owner of "a valuable piece of property" temporarily under legal disability.

As for the women of the family this sense of unrealized importance grew tenfold in their consciousness, because they had few opportunities of encountering reality in their narrow lives and because as women they were apt to dream of wealth, even of visionary wealth. It cannot be said that Clark's Field had much to do with John's marriage which had taken place in 'sixty-seven, because at that early date it was not considered a large expectation even by the Clarks. But John had a younger sister, Ada or "Addie" Clark as she was always known, and over Addie's destiny Clark's Field had a large and sinister influence as I shall presently show. At the time when her father finally abandoned his farm in favor of town life, Addie was a mere child, so young that she could forget the wholesome pictures of domestic farm industry that she must have shared. Or, if there lingered in the background of her memory a consciousness of her mother's butter-making, feeding the pigs, cooking for the occasional farm hands, washing and mending, and all the other common tasks of this laborious condition, she conveniently ignored it as women easily contrive to do.

Her life was centered in the Church Street house where the Clarks had at first indulged in certain pretensions. Addie had gone to the Alton schools and there associated with the better class of children, — a doctor's daughter and a retired bank clerk's family being the more intimate of these. As a young girl she had a transparent complexion and a thin sort of American prettiness that unfortunately quickly faded, under the influences of the Church Street house, into a sallow commonplaceness. But Addie unlike the men of the family never wholly abandoned her aspirations and ambitions. She was very careful about the young men whom she "encouraged," and the families into whose houses she would enter. Thus she sacrificed her slim chances of matrimony on the altar of a visionary family pride. One of her high-school mates, the son of the prosperous liveryman in Alton, might have married her had he been more warmly met, and taken her with him to Detroit, where in time he became the well-to-do head of a large automobile manufactory. This was not the single instance of her family pride.

It is a fascinating subject to speculate what would have happened to Ada if she had had the moral vigor to shake herself loose from the hampering family traditions of riches to be, and struck out for an independent, wholesome life as women have been known to do under similar circumstances. But Alton, like most old towns, had strong class traditions that exercised an iron influence upon feminine destinies. It

was, of course, hopeless for Ada, the daughter of a retired farmer who could not sell his farm, to come into close social contact with the local aristocracy, which consisted at this time of the Stearns and Frost relationship together with a few well-to-do merchants from B—— who had always lived in Alton and owned those large semi-suburban estates in its environs. But at least she could jealousy guard herself from falling into the mire of the commoner sort of small shopkeepers who were pressing into the Square. The end was that Addie fast became what was then called, without any circumlocution, an "old maid," and an uninteresting one, whose days were occupied by church and gossip, and who went over and over the threadbare family tradition. Old Mrs. Clark, her mother, was a realist and never forgot the farm days. She was enough of a woman to regret sincerely the fatal mistake that the family had made in trying to become something other than their destiny had fitted them to be. She was a thorn in the sentimental flesh of Addie, whose thoughts preferred to play with the dignities and ease that would be hers when the Field had been sold. Addie dressed herself as finely as she could on Sundays and in the afternoons would walk down the South Road past the abandoned Field and remark to a friend upon the family property and the misfortune that kept them all down in the depths of poverty. As the years went on and the price of real estate advanced, her tale sounded less ridiculous than it might. But it

was a bloodless sort of consolation even for Addie, and all her friends knew the story by heart and listened to it merely with kind indulgence. "A bird in the hand," etc., is a proverb peculiarly to the liking of Yankees. They do not take much interest in Peruvian mines or other forms of non-negotiable wealth unless they see a chance to work them off on a more credulous public. As for old Mrs. Clark, when she became tied to her chair, she was bitter on the topic. "That dratted old Field!" she would say with the brutal directness of the realist; "your father would have sold the whole of it for five thousand dollars and been thankful!" — a fact that seemed to her children of no importance.

When the old woman was laid away in Woodlawn beside her husband, Addie could give free rein to her fancies, untroubled by the darts of the realist. But the family fortunes soon became most desperate. Fortunately John had no children, his one small son having died as a baby. His wife, who had perhaps become tired of the family fortune as it never quite realized itself, tried to prod her shiftless husband into a greater activity. But except for the getting of the pension, which was put through in 1885, John added little to the family purse, and before his mother's death lost his position in the gas office, a new administration of the company holding that a municipal utility was not an asylum for old soldiers. The trouble was, as Mrs. John knew, and as Ada always refused to recognize, John drank. At first it was a

convivial weakness indulged in only at the reunions of old veterans, — John was a most ardent "Vet," — but it became a habit that took away his little usefulness for anything. So now the family for steady income was reduced to the pension, which was only twenty-two dollars a month. Clearly something had to be done. Mrs. John took in lodgers in the Church Street house, a clerk or two from the neighboring shops. And Addie finally brought herself to learn the manipulation of the typewriter, which was fast becoming a woman's profession, and found a position in a large store in the city.

It would seem that the Clark fortunes had reached their lowest ebb: family extinction was all that now remained for them. The Church Street house rested solely, save for the small pension, on the exertions of two ineffective women. It could just get on as it was, and if the family life had never been a bright and cheerful one, it was now drearier than ever. Then Addie married. She was nearly if not quite forty years old, and neither her brother nor sister-in-law expected such an event. She was sallow, thin, and rather querulous in temperament. Very likely Addie felt that marriage could not make her lot worse, and as middle-age threatened, she accepted the defeat of her ambitions and in the spirit of better-late-than-never struck out for herself in the race for personal happiness, throwing over the burden of Clark's Field.

At any rate, she was married to William Scarp, a

fellow-clerk in Minot Brothers — wholesale wool. Addie represented that Mr. Scarp was of excellent Southern blood from somewhere in North Carolina. It is needless to enter into that nebulous question. He was earning thirty dollars a week with Minot Brothers when they became engaged and was a few years younger than his bride. The firm gave him a five-dollar increase of salary on his marriage, old Savage remarking facetiously that he believed in rewarding courage. The couple went to live in the city, and for a year or two they moved nomadically from one boarding-house or cheap hotel to another. It may be presumed that Addie, without any clear idea of deceiving, had misled William Scarp in the matter of Clark's Field — her fixed delusion. The Field made this marriage, and it was not a happy one. The John Clarks, who still hung on in the Church Street house with an additional roomer, soon began to suspect that Addie was not wholly happy in her married life. William had a quick temper and was very plain-spoken about the "job" that Addie had "put over him" in the matter of the Clark property, though in fact she had exercised no more mendacity than women of forty in her position are wont to do. At one time shortly after the marriage Scarp had an "understanding" with John Clark about the family estate. When he learned that the Field could not be sold in the present state of its title and that such leases as had been made of it to meet taxes and other obligations tied it up until

the opening of the next century, he expressed himself abusively. Later he suggested that a "syndicate" should be formed to employ lawyers to straighten out the title and dispose of the property piecemeal as the leases fell in. It seemed a brilliant plan, quite modern in its sound, but alas! William, no more than John, could finance the "syndicate." So the suggestion lapsed, and the Scarps worried along on William's salary for a time, and then moved to Philadelphia. What Addie's experiences were there, or in Cincinnati and Indianapolis, to which cities they also wandered, I have no means of knowing, nor did the John Clarks hear from her, except for a rare penciled postcard. The Clarks, as may be observed, were no great letter-writers.

All is that one day in November of 1889, Addie arrived at the Church Street house with a forlorn parcel of a little girl and a bedraggled bag that contained her entire worldly possessions. She was ill and old. She would say little about her husband, but later it came out in the newspapers that William Scarp had been convicted of forgery and sent to prison in Indiana (where he died soon after of consumption contracted in prison). Addie had come back to the only human refuge she knew. She was too ill and too beaten by life to work. She sat around in the Church Street house dumbly for nearly a year, then died, leaving the forlorn, pale little girl to her brother and sister-in-law as a legacy. This child she had named Adelle, thus proving the persistence of

her fancy even in her forlornest hours. Ada or Addie was too common for the last of the Clarks. She should at least have something poetic for name. For who could say? She might some day become an heiress and shine in that social firmament so much desired by her mother. In that event she should not be handicapped by a vulgar name. As Addie had resumed her maiden name after Scarp had been sent to prison, the little girl was destined to grow up as Adelle Clark, — the last member of the Alton branch of the Clarks, ultimate heiress to Clark's Field, should there be anything of it left to inherit when the law let go.

The silent little girl, who played about the lodgers' rooms in the dingy Church Street house, was of course unaware of the weight of expectation hanging to her. She was almost abnormally silent, perhaps because of her depressing prenatal experiences as well as the forlorn environment of the rooming-house,— perhaps because of physical and spiritual anæmia. "She's a puny mite of a child," Mrs. John Clark said complainingly, unpromising like everything Clark; nevertheless, the last of the sturdy yeoman stock of Clarks.

III

THAT "weight of expectation" hanging to the little girl was not quite as fantastic as might seem. It must be remembered that old Samuel before his death, in pressing need of ready money to finance some foolish venture of his son, had leased a good part of Clark's Field to some speculative builders, who had covered that portion of the old pasture that bordered the South Road with a leprous growth of cheap stores, which brought in a fair return. The leases ran up to the new century. Just why this precise term for the gambling venture had been chosen probably only the lawyers who made the arrangement could say. Possibly old Samuel had superstitious reasons for not pledging the family expectation beyond the present century. He may have thought that the turn of the century would bring about some profound change in the customs and habits of society that the family could take advantage of. At any rate, so it was. And it was not many years now to the close of the century when Clark's Field would be released to its original owners with all its shabby encumbrances.

The field had gained enormously in value and importance in men's eyes these last years. The city of B—— had eaten far into the country, creating pros-

perous appendages in the way of modern suburbs for twenty miles and more from Alton, and there was much talk of its annexing the old town to itself, which it accomplished not long after. Those were the days of the "greater" everything, the worship of size. Alton in fact was now a city itself of no mean size, and the shallow stream of water that nominally divided it from B—— was a mere boundary line. As men had multiplied upon this spot of earth, needing land for dwelling and business, envious eyes had been cast upon the Field, the last large "undeveloped" tract anywhere near the great city. Men who were skillful in such real estate "deals," greedy and ingenious in the various ways of turning civic growth to private profit, were figuring upon the possibility of getting hold of Clark's Field, when the short leases expired, and after making the necessary "improvements" cutting it up for sale. They saw fat profits in the transaction. Men needed it for their lives; the community needed it for its growing corporate life. And yet it was "tied up" with a legal disability — left largely useless and waste. It looked as if when the legal spell was finally broken, as it must be, and the land so long unprofitable and idle should be apportioned to these human needs, it would be neither the Clarks nor the community that would derive benefit from it, — certainly not the people who would live upon it, — but some gang of skillful speculators, who knew the precise moment to take advantage of the mechanism of the law and the

more uncertain mechanism of human nature so as to obtain for a small amount what they could sell to others for much. The crisis in the history of Clark's Field seemed approaching.

It was time. The fence of high white palings that Samuel had jealously maintained about his old field had long since completely disappeared. Latterly the neighbors crisscrossed the vacant portions of the Field with short cuts and contractors either dumped refuse upon it or burrowed into it for gravel. The sod had long since been stripped from every foot of its surface. In a word, it was treated as no man's land, so low had the Clark family sunk in the world. And it was covered with a cloud of invisible disabilities, further than the original difficulty created by Edward S. in not leaving an address behind him. There were liens against it by the city for improvements in the way of gas and sewer and water pipes, and for taxes, as well as first, second, and third mortgages of a dubious character that John in extremity had been forced to put upon the Field in order to "carry" his expectation. Under this burden of invisible lien as well as outward degradation Clark's Field had struggled until 1898, and the ultimate doom was not far off. John thought so and struggled less to preserve his inheritance. What he owned of the Field was a diminishing fraction, long since negligible, were it not for the marvelous increase in all real-estate values, due to the growth of population in these parts and the activity of the

country. It was rumored about the Square that Clark's Field would shortly be sold for taxes, and a tax title, poor as that is, would probably be the best title that could ever be got for the Field. Capitalists and their lawyers were already figuring on that basis for the distribution of the property. . . .

But before we concern ourselves in the plot of these greedy exploiters, it would be well to go back for a time to the dingy Church Street house and the pale little Adelle, who was now in her twelfth year. Her ancestors, certainly, had done little for her physical being. She was a plain, small child, with not enough active blood in her apparently to make a vivid life under any circumstances. She was meek and self-effacing, — two excellent virtues for certain spheres, but not for a poor child in America at the opening of the new century! Her earliest impressions of life must have been the dusty stairs and torn stair carpet of her aunt's house, defaced under the dirty feet of many transient "roomers," and next her aunt herself, a silent, morose woman over fifty, who accepted life as nearly in the stoic spirit as her education permitted. Mrs. John Clark had none of Addie's cheap pretentions, fortunately: she was obviously the poor woman with a worthless husband, who kept cheap lodgings for a livelihood. She was kind enough to the little girl as such people have the time and the energy to be kind. She could not give her much thought, and as soon as Adelle was old enough to handle a broom or make beds she had

to help in the endless housework. At eight she was sent to school, however, to the public school close by in the rear of the livery-stable, where she learned what American children are supposed to learn in the grade schools. At twelve she was a small, undersized, poorly dressed, white-faced little girl, so little distinctive in any way that probably hundreds exactly like her could be picked from the public schools of any American city. If this story were a mere matter of fiction, we should be obliged to endow Adelle with some marks of exceptionality of person, or mind, or soul, — evident to the discerning reader even in her childhood. She would already possess the rudiments of an individuality under her Cinderella outside, — some poetic quality of day-dreaming or laughing or sketching. But this is a plain chronicle of very plain people as they actually found themselves in life, and it is not necessary to embellish the truth so that it may please any reader's sensibilities or ideals. Adelle Clark was a wholly ordinary, dumb little creature, neither passionate nor spiritual. She laughed less than children of her age because there was not much in her experience to laugh about. She talked less — much less — than other little girls, because the Church Street house was not a place to encourage conversation. She liked her aunt rather better than her uncle, who was an untidy, not to say smelly, person, who sat dozing in the kitchen much of the time, a few strands of long gray hair vainly trying to cover the baldness of

a blotchy head. His principal occupation these latter years was being a "Vet." He was a faithful attendant at all "post nights," "camp-fires," and veteran "reunions," and when in funds visited neighboring posts where he had friends. On his return from these festivities he was smellier and stupider than ever,— that was all his small niece realized. He never did any work, so far as she was aware, but as his wife had accepted the fact and no longer discussed it in public, the little girl did not think much about his idleness. That might be the man-habit generally.

Adelle was in her thirteenth year and in the last grade of her school when she first began to notice the presence of some strangers in the Church Street house. She was not an observant child, and there was such a succession of "roomers" in the house that a stranger's face aroused little curiosity. But these men were better dressed than any roomers and talked in tones of authority and conscious position. They held long conversations with her uncle and aunt in the dining-room behind closed doors, and once she saw a bundle of papers spread out upon the table. These days her uncle and aunt talked much about titles, mortgages, deeds, and other matters she did not understand nor ask about. But she felt that something important was astir in the Church Street house, as a child realizes vaguely such movements outside its own sphere. Once one of the men, who was putting on his silk hat in the

hall and preparing to leave the house, inquired, "Is that the girl?" To which question her uncle and aunt answered briefly, "Yes." The tone of the stranger was exactly as if he had asked, "Is that the bundle of clothes we were talking about?"

Something was afoot of momentous importance to Adelle, as we shall shortly discover. Fate once more in the person of a feeble Clark was about to play her an unkind trick. For John, reduced to complete incompetence by his life and his habit of drink, pestered by the accumulating claims upon Clark's Field, had consented to an "arrangement" that certain capitalists had presented to him through their lawyers. They had urged him to sell to them all the remaining equity that he held in the property, giving a quitclaim deed for himself and his wife and for Adelle, whose legal guardian he was. The purchasers would assume all the liabilities of the encumbered Field, the risk of title, and for this complete surrender of the family interest in Clark's Field, John Clark was to receive the sum of twenty-five thousand dollars all told in cash. It was five times what his father had been anxious to get for the same property, as the lawyers pointed out, when John in the beginning talked large about the great possibilities of his Field. It was true, so they said, that the property had increased in value in the last twenty years, but so had the encumbrances increased, and there was always the danger of expensive litigation and loss due to the cloudy title, even

after the lapse of fifty years since the disappearance of Edward S. They could not see their way to offering another dollar for the dubious gamble before them, so they said. And for this twenty-five thousand dollars in ready money, all the family expectations were to be cashed in, all the hopes of Samuel, the pretensions of Addie, the desires and needs of John and his wife, not to mention the future of the small Adelle. John hesitated. . . .

In the end he was convinced, or his desire for some ready money overcame his scruples. His wife, who was perhaps agreeably surprised to find that the Clark expectations had any cash value, counseled him to accept the offered terms. No doubt, she admitted, the lawyers were probably doing them; that was the way of lawyers. But they had no money to spend on other lawyers to find a better bargain or to engage in the speculation upon the Field themselves. As for hanging on to Clark's Field, the family had had enough of that. "A bird in the hand," etc. So the numerous papers were drawn and John even touched a small advance payment. Adelle remembered the discussions — not to say quarrels — between her uncle and aunt over the use to which they should put the Clark fortune when it should finally be theirs. John was for moving away from Alton altogether, which was not what it had been once for residence he said. He talked of going into the country and buying a farm. His wife, who remembered how he had scorned to work the old Clark farm when it

was a paying possibility, smiled grimly at his talk. She wanted to take a larger house in the neighborhood, furnish it better, and bid for a higher class of roomers. Hers was, of course, the more sensible plan. They were still discussing their plans, and the lawyers were taking their time about preparing the interminable series of legal papers that seemed necessary when the great Grand Army Encampment of 1900 came off in Chicago. John, who had been obliged latterly to forego these annual sprees, resolved to attend the reunion of his old comrades and "to go in style." For this purpose he obtained a small sum from the prospective purchasers of Clark's Field, who were only too ready to get him further committed to their bargain by a payment down and a receipt on account, — on condition, of course, that he sign an agreement to sell the property when the necessary formalities could be satisfied. So he signed with an easy flourish the simple agreement presented to him, pocketed two hundred dollars, and bought a new suit of clothes with a black-felt veteran's hat, the first he had had in many years. When Adelle watched him strut down Church Street on the way to the train one hot July morning, splendid in his new uniform with his white gloves and short sword under his arm, she did not know that she herself had contributed to this piece of self-indulgence her last right to a share in the Clark possession, — her one inheritance of any value from her mother. Very possibly she would not have said any-

thing had she known all the facts, had she been old enough to realize the significance of that signature her uncle had given the lawyers a few days before. Probably she would have accepted this act of fate as meekly as she had all else in her short life. For it must be clearly understood that the signature was irrevocable. No change of mind, no sober second thought coming into John's cloudy mind, would be of any use. A contract of sale is as binding under such circumstances as the deed itself.

Adelle felt an unconscious relief in the absence of her uncle from the house. There was an end to the disputes about the money, and his unpleasant person no longer occupied the best chair in the kitchen. Her aunt also seemed to be more cheerful than was her wont. It was the slack season in the rooming business, and so the two had some spare time on their hands in the long summer days and could dawdle about, an unusual luxury. They even went to walk in the afternoons. Her aunt took Adelle to see Clark's Field, — a forlorn expanse of empty land with a fringe of flimsy one-story shops along its edge that did not attract the child. She never remembered, naturally, what her aunt told her about the Field, but she must have learned something of its story because she always had in her mind a sense of the importance of this waste and desolate city field. In her childish way she got a vague notion of some great wrong that had been done about the land so that her uncle was smelly and stupid and her aunt

had to take in more roomers than she liked. That was as close to the facts as she could get then — as close, it may be said, as many people ever get. . . . Then they went to look at houses, a more interesting occupation to the child. Her aunt seemed much concerned in the comparative size and location and number of rooms of different houses and this Adelle could understand. The family was going to move sometime from the Church Street house. . . . In these simple ways the two passed a quiet vacation of ten days. Then came a telegram, and three days later arrived the remains of Veteran John Clark, accompanied by members of the local G.A.R. post who had brought back the body of their dead comrade. John Clark had kept his boasting word to his wife that "this time he would show the boys a good time and prove to 'em that his talk about his property was n't all hot air!" He had in truth shown himself such a good time that he could not stand a spell of excessively hot weather, to which he succumbed like a sapped reed. A very considerable funeral was arranged and conducted by the members of G.A.R. Post Number 1 of Alton, to which John Clark had belonged. There was a military band and the post colors, and a number of oldish men in blue uniforms trailed behind the hearse all the way to the cemetery where the veteran was laid away in the lot with his mother and father. Little Adelle, riding in the first carriage with her aunt, observed all this military display over the dead veteran, and

concluded that she had done her uncle an injustice during his life. It seemed that he was really a much more important person than she had supposed him to be. This burial was the last benefit poor John Clark received from a grateful country for that spurt of patriotism or willfulness that had led him to run away from the Clark farm to the war forty years before.

And here really concludes the history of the Clarks in the story of Clark's Field. For Adelle, upon whom the burden of the inheritance was to fall, was only half a Clark at the most, and had largely escaped the deadly tradition of family expectations under which Addie had been blighted; while her aunt, of course, had no Clark blood in her veins and had been cured of the Clark habit of expecting.

IV

It may easily be imagined that the veteran's untimely death at the Grand Army Reunion caused more uneasiness in certain other quarters than it did in the Church Street house, where John's going had its mitigations. The lawyers who had arranged the purchase of the Clark interest in the great Field did not really fear that their plans for the cheap capture of the property would ultimately miscarry. But John's death must cause further delay, which might possibly be improved by other interested speculators. And so the legal representatives of the capitalists concerned in the "deal" constituted themselves at once friends and advisers of the widow. They assured her that a mere formality must be satisfied before she could actually touch her husband's estate, and promised to attend to the legal matters without expense to her, it being understood, of course, that whenever the law allowed she should carry out her husband's agreement to sell the Clark interest in the Field. They even went so far as to offer further small advances to the widow if she found herself in immediate need. But this the widow resolutely refused. She was becoming a little suspicious of so much thoughtful kindliness from these lawyers, whom after the prejudice of her

sort she was wont to regard as human harpies. She had her widow's pension and her roomers, and her expenses would be considerably lessened by the death of the incompetent veteran, who would no longer be begging money for his "reunions."

There was, of course, Adelle. Her uncle had been her legal guardian and as such had intended to sell her interest in the Field for a pittance. The lawyers assumed that her aunt would be appointed by the probate court to the empty honor of guardianship. Otherwise they regarded her, as everybody always did, as entirely negligible. And she so regarded herself. The lawyers were prompt in having the guardianship question brought up in the probate court for settlement first. It was introduced there as a motion early in the fall term of court, the papers being presented to the judge by the junior member of the distinguished firm of B—— lawyers, Bright, Seagrove, and Bright. Any other judge, probably, would have scribbled his initials then and there upon the printed application for guardianship,—the affair being in charge of such eminent counsel,—and there must have been an end altogether to Adelle's expectations and of this story. That was what the lawyers naturally expected. But this judge, after a hasty glance or two at the application, took the matter under advisement.

"Of course the old boy had to sleep upon it!" young Bright reported to the senior members of the firm. The lawyers of B—— were accustomed

to make fun of Judge Orcutt or grumble about his ways of doing things. He was certainly different from the ordinary run of probate judges or of all judges for that matter. The smart law firms that had dealings with him professed to consider him a poor lawyer, but everybody knows that eminent lawyers usually have a poor opinion of the ability of judges. They reason that if the judges had their ability, they would not be poorly paid judges, but holding out their baskets for the fat fruit falling abundantly from the corporation trees.

It should be said that the law was not Judge Orcutt's first love: probably was not his supreme mistress at any time. Perhaps for that very reason he made a better probate judge — a more human judge — than any of the smart lawyers could have made. The little gray-haired judge was a poet, and not an unpublished poet. I will not stop to pass judgment on those thin volumes of verse, elegantly printed and bound, that from time to time appeared in the welter of modern literature with the judge's name. The judge was fonder of them, no doubt, and perhaps prouder of them than Bright, Seagrove, and Bright are of their large retainers. And I believe that the published volumes of verse, and the unprinted ones within his heart and brain, made Judge Orcutt an altogether sounder judge than if he had mused in his idle hours upon the law or upon corporation fees. He was one of those rare judges, who even after twenty years of forms — motions and pleas

and precedents — could never wholly forget the individual human being behind the legal form.

And so in this trivial matter of appointing a guardian for a poor girl, the probate judge could not ignore Adelle in the mass of legal verbiage through which such things are done. Who was this Adelle Clark? and what sort of person was this aunt who seemed willing and anxious to assume the legal and moral guardianship of the minor? An aunt by marriage only, was n't it? Yes, by marriage he assured himself after consulting again the stiff paper form that the lawyers had properly filled out; and he gave one of those funny little quirks to his eye which he did when not wholly satisfied with a "proposition" presented to him. And here was the characteristic difference between Judge Orcutt and any other probate judge. He speculated — maybe for only the better part of ten seconds — but he speculated upon the entity of the small human being that had fallen within the bounds of his court. Was it really for this little girl's best good to let this aunt by marriage take charge of her? Did any hocus-pocus contriving, with which he had become only too familiar, lie beneath this innocent application?

Probably at this point the poet judge would have dismissed the matter from speculation and signed the papers as he usually did, very much, after all, like any other judge, with an additional sigh because he could never really discover all the necessary facts. But another observation held his pen. The paper

had been brought to him by young Bright, of Bright, Seagrove, and Bright — a notable firm of lawyers, but not one famous for their charitable practice. Why should Bright, Seagrove, and Bright interest themselves in procuring the guardianship of a poor girl? Ah, it is to be feared that this is where the eminent counsel "fell down" badly, as young Bright said. They should have sent an office boy with the papers or let the aunt go there alone to see the judge! For Judge Orcutt, after another moment of frowning meditation, threw the document into that basket which contained papers for further consideration. Had the girl expectations of property? He would inquire, at least have the girl and her aunt into his court and get a good look at them before performing his routine function of initialing the legal form. Poet that he was, he prided himself much on his powers of penetration into human motives, when he had his subject before him. . . .

For this reason Adelle and her aunt were notified that they should appear before His Honor. The lawyers told Mrs. Clark that the visit to the probate court was a mere formality, — meant nothing at all. But under their breaths they cursed Judge Orcutt for a meddlesome old nuisance, which would not have worried him. Adelle and her aunt, got up in their best mourning, accordingly appeared before the probate judge, who at the moment was hearing a case of non-support. So they waited in the dim, empty courtroom, while the judge, ignoring their

presence, went on with the question of whether John Thums could pay his wife three dollars a week or only two-fifty. At last he settled it at three dollars and beckoned to Mrs. Clark and the little girl to come forward and courteously inquired their business. Ignoring the officious young lawyer, who was there and tried to shuffle the matter through, Judge Orcutt asked both Adelle and her aunt all sorts of questions that did not always seem to the point. He appeared to be curious about the family history. Mr. Bright fumed. However, it was all going well enough until Mrs. John blurted out something about the girl's share of the money that was coming to them. At the word "money" the judge pricked up his ears. In his court certainly money was the root of much evil as well as of pain. What money? Was the little girl an heiress? From the blundering lips of honest Mrs. Clark the story tumbled out, under the judge's expert questioning, exactly as it was. At the conclusion, with one significant scowl at the uncomfortable Mr. Bright, the judge gathered to himself all the papers, saying that he should give the matter further consideration and disappeared into his private chamber. The two Clarks returned to Alton much mystified.

Young Mr. Bright remarked to his superiors, on his return to the office, that he thought "there will be the devil to pay!" And there was. Of this the little girl and her aunt knew nothing except that another legal difficulty had been discovered and that

the lawyers did not seem as genial and happy as they had before. Thus a week slipped past, and then they were again summoned to the probate court and taken into the judge's private chamber behind the courtroom.

V

A GOOD deal had happened in a quiet way during these seven days that had much influence upon the fate of Clark's Field and of Adelle Clark. Up to this time Judge Orcutt had never heard of Clark's Field or of the Clarks. He lived on the other side of B——, in the country, and was not much of a gossip. But he had ways of finding out about what was going on when he wanted to. A word lightly cast forth at the club table where he always lunched, and he could get a clue to almost anything of current interest. And that noon, after he had first seen Mrs. Clark and her niece, my friend Edsall happened to be at the judge's table. Orcutt asked him what he knew about the Clark property in Alton. Edsall happened to know almost all of importance that has been told here and more. He knew of the movement on foot to develop the property, so long held in idleness, but he did not know who were the persons interested. He could find out. He did so, and within the week he had given the probate judge the outline of as pretty a story of cheap knavishness as the judge had come across for years.

"No one can say what the property is worth now," Edsall reported, "but it must be millions."

"Millions!" the judge growled. "And they're

trying to get it from an old woman and a girl for twenty-five thousand dollars."

"A plain steal," the real estate man remarked.

"Sculduggery — I smelt it!" laughed the judge.

One of the first results of this was that Mr. Osmond Bright, senior member of Bright, Seagrove, and Bright, was invited to call upon Judge Orcutt in his chambers, and there received probably the worst lecture this eminent corporation lawyer ever took from any man. He blustered, of course, and defended his clients on the ground that they were taking a great risk with the title, which was unsound, etc., etc. The poet judge dealt him a savage look and curtly advised him to withdraw at once from the position of counsel to the men involved in this shady transaction; at least never to appear in his court in the guardianship case. (It may be said here that the firm did withdraw from the case, as there was, in their words, "nothing doing." But not much was accomplished, for another equally eminent and unscrupulous firm of lawyers was employed the next day and went to work in a more devious manner to get hold of the Field.)

Next the judge devoted half an hour to meditation over the fate of Adelle Clark, more time than any one in her whole career hitherto had given to consideration of her. It was clear enough to him that Mrs. John Clark, honest woman though she appeared to be, could not cope with the situation that must present itself. Nor, of course, could the

girl. The nefarious agreement to sell out all the Clark equity in the Field which John Clark had executed prior to his departure for the Grand Army Reunion, and which Judge Orcutt had forced the elder Bright to produce, was evidence enough that the little girl needed some strong defender if she were not to be fleeced utterly of her property. For she was heir now to nearly three fourths of what the Clark estate might bring, and her aunt to the remaining portion — so said the law. But who could be found, modern knight, honest and disinterested and able enough to take upon his shoulders the difficult defense of the girl's rights?

Judge Orcutt had not been greatly impressed by the appearance of the girl. She was nearly fourteen now, and seemed to the discriminating taste of the judge to be a quite ordinary young girl with a rather common aunt. Nevertheless that must not enter into the question: she had her rights just as much as if she had been all that his poet's heart might desire a young girl to be! Rights — a curious term over which the judge often stumbled. Had she any more real right to the property than the sharks who were trying to steal it from her? Who had any right to this abandoned field that for fifty years had been waiting for an absent heir to announce himself? Did it really belong to the Public? When he got thus far in his speculation, the judge always pulled himself up with a start. That was n't his business. He was bound to administer the antiquated and curious sys-

tem of laws concerning the bequest of property with a serious sense of their sacredness whether he felt it or not. They seemed to be an essential part of the crazy structure of society that must not be questioned, least of all by a probate judge! If men had devised these unreal rules and absurd regulations, probably there was some divine necessity for them beyond his human insight. Judge Orcutt never got farther than this point in his speculations. With a sigh he dropped the Clark case, and the next morning sent for the two women to appear in his court.

It did not take him long this time to discover that they were singularly without good friends or advisers. They had no known relatives, no one who could be expected to take a friendly interest in their affairs and trusted to manage the business wisely. In earlier days Judge Orcutt would have tried to find, in such a case, some able and scrupulous young lawyer to perform the necessary function, somebody like himself who would have a chivalrous regard for the defenseless condition of the two women. Either that breed of lawyers had run out, or the judge was becoming less confiding. For latterly, since the introduction of trust companies, he had more than once put such cases in charge of these impersonal agents. Trust companies were specially designed to meet two pressing human wants, — permanence and honesty. They might not always be efficient, for they were under such strict legal supervision that they must always take the timid course, and they charged

highly for their services. But they could not very well be dishonest, nor die! They would go on forever, at least as long as there was the institution of private property and an intricate code of laws to safeguard it. Thus the judge argued to himself again in considering the plight of these Clarks, and decided to use the Washington Trust Company of B——, whose officers he knew. . . .

After explaining all this in simple terms to Mrs. Clark, he proposed to her that her niece's interest in the Clark estate should be placed in the hands of the trust company rather than hers, if they would accept such an involved guardianship as Adelle Clark's promised to be.

"You know, my good woman," he said in conclusion, "you must be careful in this matter." (The judge's manner towards "ordinary people" was aristocratically condescending, and he considered the rooming-house keeper very ordinary.) "Of course, you understand that I — that this court — has no control whatever over your acts. You can if you like carry out your husband's intention and convey to these parties all your interest in his estate. But I cannot permit you to jeopardize the interests of this minor, who is a ward of my court, by conveying her share of the estate to them on any such terms as they propose."

"I'm sure," Mrs. John Clark mumbled in an aggrieved tone, "I had no idea of doing any harm to the girl."

"No, of course not, my good woman. But you don't understand. As I have told you, it looks as if there might be some money, considerable money, coming to you and to her from this land when the title is straightened out, and you don't want to do anything foolish now."

"I s'pose not," Mrs. Clark assented, somewhat dubiously. The "good woman" had heard of this bonanza to come from Clark's Field when the title was made right for so many years that she was humanly anxious to touch a tangible profit at once. But she knew only too well that her husband was a poor business man and probably the judge was right in telling her not to sell the Field yet. The probate judge seemed to take a good deal of interest in them for a gentleman of his importance. So she listened respectfully to what he went on to say.

"You can do whatever you like, as I said. But if you should decide to dispose of your husband's estate as he intended, your niece's representative might be forced to oppose you, which would add another bad complication to the legal troubles of Clark's Field, and necessarily defer the time when either of you could sell the land or derive an adequate return from it."

He paused after this polite threat, to let the idea sink in.

"I 'm sure she and me don't want to fight," Mrs. Clark quickly replied with a touch of humor, and the first expression that the judge had seen upon the

little girl's mute face appeared. A smile touched her lips, flickered and went out. She sat stiffly beside her aunt in the judge's great leather chair, — a pale, badly dressed little mouse of a girl, who did not seem to understand the conversation.

"Well, then, I take it you will be guided in your actions about your estate by the advice of your niece's guardian, whom I shall appoint."

He explained to them what a trust company was, and said that he hoped to get the Washington Trust Company to undertake the guardianship of the little girl. Then he dismissed them, appointing another meeting a week hence when they were to return for final settlement of the matter. So they left the judge's chambers. The girl neither dropped a curtesy, as the judge would have thought suitable, nor gave him another smile, nor even opened her lips. She faded out of his chambers after her black aunt like a pale winter shadow.

The judge thought she showed a deplorable lack of breeding. He was conscious that he had probably saved a fortune for the girl by all the pains he was taking in this matter and felt that at least common politeness was his due. But one was never paid for these things except by a sense of duty generously performed. What was duty? And off the judge went into another thorny speculation that would have made Bright, Seagrove, and Bright laugh, and they were not inclined to laugh either at or with Judge Orcutt these days. For in the words of the junior

member, this old maid of a probate judge had cut them out of the fattest little piece of graft the office had seen in a twelvemonth! If judges had been elective in the good old Commonwealth of M ——, Judge Orcutt's chances of reëlection would have been slim, for Bright, Seagrove, and Bright had strange underground connections with the politicians then governing the city. Perhaps the poet in the judge would have rejoiced at such a misadventure and profited thereby. As it was, whenever Bright, Seagrove, and Bright had business in the probate court, which was not often, they got other lawyers to represent them. Even "eminent counsel" shrink from appearing before a judge who knows their real character.

VI

ADELLE was not really unresponsive to the judge's kindness. She liked the polite old gentleman, — old to fourteen because of the grizzled mustache, — and was for her deeply impressed by her visits to the probate judge's chambers. It was the first real event in her pale life, that and her uncle's funeral, which seemed closely related. They made the date from which she could reckon herself a person. What impressed her more than the austere dignity of the judge's private rooms, with their prints of famous personages, lined bookcases, and rich furniture, was Judge Orcutt himself. He was the first gentleman she had ever met in any real sense of the word. And Judge Orcutt was very much of a gentleman in almost every sense of the word. He came from an old Puritan family, as American families are reckoned, which had had its worthies for a young man to respect, and its traditions, not of wealth but of culture and breeding, kindly humanity, and an interest in life and letters. Something of this aristocratic inheritance could be felt in his manners by the two women who were not of his social class and who were treated with an even greater consideration than if they had been. Adelle liked also his sober gray suit with the very white linen and black tie, which he

wore like a man who cares more for the cleanliness and propriety of his person than for fashion. All this and the modulated tones of his cultivated voice had made a lively impression upon the dumb little girl. She would have done anything in the world to please the judge, even defying her aunt if that had been necessary. And she had always stood in a healthy awe of her vigorous, outspoken aunt.

The first occasion when Adelle had an opinion all her own and announced it publicly and unasked was due to the judge. Of course the question of guardianship was much discussed in their very limited circle. Joseph Lovejoy, the manager of Pike's Livery at the corner of Church Street, — the Pike whose son Addie Clark had disdained, — was the oldest and most important of the "roomers." Mr. Lovejoy was of the opinion that trust companies were risky inventions that might some day disappear in smoke. He advised the perplexed widow to "hire a smart lawyer" to look out for her business interests. What did an old probate judge know about real estate? This was the occasion on which Adelle made her one contribution: she thought that "Judge Orcutt must be wiser than any lawyer because he was a judge." A silly answer as the liveryman said, yet surprising to her aunt. And she added — "He's a gentleman, too," though how the little girl discovered it is inexplicable.

The news of the prospective importance of Clark's Field had quickly spread through Church Street and

the Square, where the widow's credit much improved. Something really seemed about to happen of consequence to the old Field and the modest remnants of the Clark family. Emissaries from the routed speculators came to see the widow. It dribbled down from the magnates of the local bank, the River National, by way of the cashier to the chief clerk, that the widow Clark might easily get herself into trouble and lose her property if she took everybody's advice. It should be said that the River National Bank disliked these rich upstart trust companies; also that the capitalists who had laid envious eyes on the Field were associated with the local bank, which expected to derive profit from this deal, — the largest that Alton had ever known even during the boom years at the turn of the century.

What wonder, then, that the widow Clark, who was a sensible enough woman in the matter of roomers and household management and knew a bum from a modest paying laboring man as well as any one in the profession, was perplexed in the present situation as to the course of true wisdom? Incredible as it may seem, it was Adelle who during this time of doubt gave her aunt strength to resist much bad advice. Her influence was, as might be expected, merely negative. For after that single deliverance of opinion she made no comment on all the discussion and advice. She seemed to consider the question settled already: it was this tacit method of treating the guardianship as an accomplished fact

that really influenced her troubled aunt. When a certain point of household routine came up between them, Adelle observed that, as they should not be at home on Thursday morning, the thing would have to go over till the following day. Thursday was the day of their appointment with the probate judge. Mrs. Clark, of course, had not forgotten this important fact, but not having yet made up her distracted mind she had purposely ignored the appointment to see what her niece would say. Thus Adelle quietly settled the point: they were to keep the appointment with the judge. Another faint occasion of displaying will came to her, so faint that it would seem hardly worth mentioning except that a faithful historian must present every possible manifestation of character on the part of this colorless heroine.

It occurred when they saw the judge on Thursday. The probate judge, who was busy with another case on their arrival, did not invite them into his private room as on former occasions, but merely shoved across his bench a card on which he had written a name and an address.

"It's all arranged," he said to Mrs. Clark, "Just go over to the Washington Trust Company and ask for Mr. Gardiner. He will take care of you," and he smiled pleasantly in dismissal.

The widow was much put out by this summary way of dealing, for she had intended to pour out to the judge her doubts, though she probably knew that in the end she should follow his advice. She

hesitated in the corridor of the court-house, saying something about not being in any hurry to go to the Washington Trust Company. She had not fully made up her mind, etc. But Adelle, as if she had not heard her aunt's objections, set off down the street in the direction of the trust company's handsome building. Her aunt followed her. The matter was thus settled.

Adelle had also felt disappointed at their brief interview; not bitterly disappointed because she never felt bitterly about anything, but consciously sorry to have missed the expected conference in the judge's private chamber. She might never see him again! As a matter of fact, although the probate court necessarily had much to do with her fate in the settlement of the involved estate, it was not for seven years that she had another chance of seeing the judge in chambers, and that, as we shall discover, was on a very different occasion. Whether during all these years Adelle ever thought much about the judge, nobody knows, but Judge Orcutt often had occasion to recollect the pale, badly dressed little girl who had no manners, when he signed orders and approved papers *in re Adelle Clark, minor.*

VII

THE Washington Trust Company had grown in power to the envy of its conservative rivals ever since its organization, and was now one of the richest reservoirs of capital in the city. Recently it had moved into its new home in the banking quarter of the city, — the most expensive, commodious, and richly ornamented bank premises in B——. The Washington Trust Company was managed by "the younger crowd," and one way in which the new blood manifested itself was by the erection of this handsome granite building with its ornate bronze and marble appointments. The officers felt that theirs was a new kind of business, largely involving women, invalids, and dependents of rich habits, and for these a display of magnificence was "good business."

When Adelle and her aunt paused inside the massive bronze doors of the Trust Building and looked about them in bewilderment across the immense surface of polished marble floor, it probably did not occur to either of them that a new page in the book of destiny had been turned for them. Yet even in Adelle's small, silent brain there must have penetrated a consciousness of the place, — the home as it were of her new guardian, — and such a magnificent home that it inspired at once both timidity and pride. The two

women wandered about the banking floor for some minutes, peering through the various grilles at the busy clerks, observing the careless profusion of notes, gold, and documents of value that seemed piled on every desk, as if to indicate ostentatiously the immensity of the property interests confided to the company's care. At last, after they had been rebuffed by several busy clerks, a uniformed attendant found them and inquired their business. The widow handed to him the card she had received from the probate judge, and the usher at once led them to an elegant little private elevator that shot them upwards through the floors of the bank to the upper story. Here, in a small, heavily rugged room behind a broad mahogany table, they met Mr. John Gardiner, then the "trust officer" of the Washington Trust Company. He was a heavy, serious-minded, bald man of middle age, and Adelle at once made up her mind that she liked him far less than the judge. The trust officer did not rise on their entrance as the judge always had risen; merely nodded to them, motioned to some chairs against the wall, and continued writing on a memorandum pad. Both the widow and Adelle felt that they were not of much importance to the Washington Trust Company, which was precisely what the trust company liked to have its clients feel.

"Well," Mr. Gardiner said at last, clearing his voice, "so you are Mrs. John Clark and Miss Adelle Clark?"

Of course he knew the fact, but some sort of introduction must be made. Mrs. Clark, who was sitting hostilely on the edge of her chair, hugging to herself a little black bag, nodded her head guardedly in response.

"I presume you have come to see me about the guardianship matter," the trust officer continued. Then he fussed for some moments among the papers on his desk as if he were hunting for something, which he at last found. He seized the paper with relief, and took another furtive look at his visitors from under his gold glasses as if to make sure that no mistake had been made and began again: —

"At the request of Judge Orcutt," — he pronounced the probate judge's name with unction and emphasis, — "we have looked into the matter of the Clark estate, and we have found, what I suppose you are already aware of, that your husband's estate is extremely involved and with it this little girl's interest in the property." For the first time he turned his big bald head in Adelle's direction, and finding there apparently nothing to hold his attention, ignored her completely thereafter, and confined himself exclusively to the widow.

He paused and cleared his throat as if he expected some defense of the Clark estate from the widow. But she said nothing. To tell the truth, she did n't like the trust officer's manner. As she said afterwards to Mr. Lovejoy, he seemed to be "throwing it into her," trying to impress her with her own unimpor-

tance and the goodness of the Washington Trust Company in concerning itself with her soiled linen. "As if he were doing me a big favor," she grumbled. That was in fact exactly the idea that Mr. Gardiner had of the whole affair. If it had been left to him, as he had told the president of the trust company, he would not have the Washington Trust Company mix itself up in such a dubious "proposition" as the Clark estate was likely to prove. He was of the "old school" of banking, — a relic of earlier days, — and did not approve of the company's accepting any but the most solid trusts that involved merely the trouble of cutting four per cent coupons in their management. But his superior officers had listened favorably to the request of the probate judge, wishing always to "keep in close touch" with the judge of the court where they had so much business, and also having a somewhat farther vision than the trust officer, as will be seen. A recommendation by the probate judge was to the Washington Trust Company in the nature of a royal invitation, not to be considered on purely selfish grounds; and besides, they already scented rich pickings in the litigious situation of Clark's Fields. They would be stupid if they had to content themselves with their usual one per cent commission on income. The assistant to the president of the trust company, a lively young banker of the "new school," Mr. Ashly Crane, who had been asked to examine into the situation of the Clark estate, had recognized its manifold possibilities and

had recommended favorable action. In the event it proved that the "new school" was right: the Washington Trust Company lost nothing by its disinterested act. (It never did lose anything by its acts of charity, and that is why it has prospered so abundantly.)

"I do not know what the trust company will be able to do with the property," the cautious Mr. Gardiner continued. "We have not yet completed our examination: our attorneys are at present considering certain legal points. But one thing is pretty certain," he hastened to add with emphasis. "You must look for no income from the estate for the present, — probably not for a term of years."

This made little impression upon the women. It meant nothing at all to Adelle, and the widow had become so accustomed to disappointments about the Clark property that she did not move a muscle at the announcement, though she inwardly might regret the twenty-five thousand dollars which had been promised her husband by the other crowd. That would mean a good deal more to her business than two or three times the amount after a "term of years." She was getting on, and the rooming business needed capital badly. However, she had determined to do nothing detrimental to the interests of her husband's niece, as the probate judge had told her she might if she listened to the seduction of immediate cash. And fortunately the bank officer did not ask for money to pay taxes and interest on the

mortgages, which had been the bugbear of her married life. This was the next point touched upon by the trust officer.

"I presume that you are not in a financial position to advance anything towards the expenses of the estate, which for the present may be heavy?" He gave the widow another furtive look under his glasses, as if to detect what money she had on her person.

Mrs. Clark shook her head vigorously: that she would not do — go on pouring money into the bottomless pit of Clark's Field! Of course the trust company had considered this point and made up its mind already to advance the estate the necessary funds up to a safe amount, which would become another lien on the little girl's income from her mother's inheritance, should there be any.

This matter disposed of, the trust officer asked searching questions about the Clark genealogy, which the widow answered quite fully, for it was a subject on which her sister-in-law Addie had educated her so completely that she knew everything there was to know except the exact whereabouts of Edward S. or his heirs. Mr. Gardiner was specially interested in Edward S., who had disappeared fifty years ago, and asked Mrs. Clark to send him immediately all family letters bearing on Edward. It was apparent that the trust company meant to go after Edward and his heirs and either discover them if it were humanly possible or establish the fact that they could safely be ignored. And they were in a much

better position, with their numerous connections and correspondents, to prosecute such a search successfully than any one else who had tried it. Mr. Gardiner, however, expressed himself doubtfully of their success.

"We shall do our best," he said, "and let you know from time to time of the progress we are making."

And after exacting a few more signatures from the widow, who by this time had become adept in signing "Ellen Trigg Clark," the trust officer nodded to his visitors in dismissal.

It would be difficult to say what Adelle was thinking about during this interview. She sat perfectly still as she always did: one of her minor virtues as a child was that she could sit for hours without wriggling or saying a word. She did not even stare about her at the lofty room with its colored glass windows and shiny mahogany furniture as any other young person might. She gazed just above the bald crown of the trust officer's head and seemed more nearly absorbed in Nirvana than a young American ever becomes. But there is little doubt that the long interview in the still, high room of the bank building did make an impression upon the trust company's ward.

She trailed after her aunt down the marble stairs, for the trust officer did not trouble himself about their exit from his office as he did with solid clients who had going estates, and the widow was too timid to summon the bronze car from its hole

in the wall. They passed through the great banking room on the main floor, where, because of the largeness and the decorum of this sanctuary of property, a crowd of patrons seemed to make no disturbance. Adelle sat in reverie all the way out to Alton in the street-car and did not wake up until they turned from the Square into the dingy side street. Then she said, apropos of nothing, —

"It's a pretty place."

"What place?" snapped the widow, who realized that a whole working day had been lost "for nothing," and the roomers' beds were still to make.

"That trust place," Adelle explained.

"Um," her aunt responded enigmatically, as one who would say that "pretty is as pretty does."

It had not appeared to her as a place of beauty. But to Adelle, who had seen nothing more ornate than the Everitt Grade School of Alton, the Second Congregational Church, and the new City Hall, the interior of the Washington Trust Company, with its bronze and marble and windows that shed soft violet lights on the white floors, awakened an unknown appetite for richness and splendor, color and size. That was what she had been thinking about without realizing it while the trust officer talked to her aunt. She called this barbaric profusion of rich materials "pretty," and felt, very faintly, a personal happiness in being connected with it in some slight manner.

VIII

If the excursions to the probate court and the trust company had roused expectations of change in their condition, they were to be disappointed. From that afternoon when they turned into Church Street on their return from the Washington Trust Company, the monotony and drudgery of their former life settled down on them with an even greater insistence. The dusty ROOMS FOR RENT sign was tucked into the front window with its usual regularity, for do what she could, Mrs. Clark could not attain that pinnacle of the landlady's aspirations, a houseful of permanent roomers. The young men were inconstant, the middle-aged liable to matrimony, the old to death, and all to penury or change of occupation and residence. So the old fight went on as before during all the twenty-three years of the widow Clark's married life, — a fight to exist in a dusty, worn, and shabby fashion, with a file of roomers tramping out the stair carpet, spotting the furniture, and using up the linen. To be sure, two great drains upon income no longer troubled her, — Clark's Field and the Veteran. With these encumbrances removed she could make ends meet.

After a few weeks she forgot her doubts about the wisdom of following Judge Orcutt's advice and

placing her interest in the estate together with her niece's in care of the trust company. The manager of the livery-stable, who was the nearest thing to permanency the house knew, shook his head over her folly in trusting a trust company, but the speculators and their lawyers let her severely alone, knowing that they had been outwitted and flitting to other schemes. The Square seemed to accept the fresh eclipse of the Clark estate after its false appearance of coming to a crisis. And the character of the Square was fast changing with all else these busy years. It was no longer a neighborhood center of gossip. There were new faces — and many foreign ones — in the rows of shops. The neighborhood was deteriorating, or evolving, as you happened to look at it.

The Washington Trust Company seemed to have quite forgotten the existence of the Clark women except for the occasional appearance in the mail of an oblong letter addressed in type to Mrs. Ellen Trigg Clark, which bore in its upper left-hand corner a neat vignette of the trust building. Adelle studied these envelopes carefully, not to say tenderly, with something of the emotion that the trust company's home had roused in her the only time she had been within its doors. The vignette, which represented a considerable Grecian temple, she thought "pretty," and the neat, substantial-looking envelope suggested a rich importance to the communication within that also pleased the girl. She knew that it had to do with her remotely. Yet there was never anything thrill-

ing in these communications from the trust company. They were signed by Mr. Gardiner and curtly informed Mrs. Clark of certain meaningless facts or more often curtly inquired for information, — "Awaiting your kind reply," etc., or merely requested politely another example of the widow's signature. They were models of brief, impersonal, business communications. If Adelle had ever had any experience of personal relationship she might have resented these perfunctory epistles from her legal guardian, but for all she knew that was the way all people treated one another. Evidently her legal guardian had no desire for any closer personal contact with its ward, and she waited, not so much patiently as pensively, for it to demonstrate a more lively interest in her existence. . . .

Meanwhile there was debate in the Church Street house about a matter that more closely touched the young girl. She had graduated from the Everitt School the preceding June and would naturally be going on now into the high school with her better conditioned schoolmates. But she herself, though not averse to school, had suggested that she should stay at home and help her aunt in the house or find a place in one of the shops in the Square where she might earn a little money. Mrs. Clark, who has been described as a realist, might have favored this practical plan, had it not been that Adelle was a Clark — all that was left of them, in fact. The widow had lived so long under the shadow of the Clark expec-

tations that she could not easily escape from their control now that she was alone. A Trigg, of course, under similar circumstances would have gone into a shop at once, but a Clark ought to have a better education in deference to her expectations. The heiress of Clark's Field must never conclude her education with the grades. . . . So finally it was decided that Adelle should enter the high school for a year, at any rate, and to that end a new school dress of sober blue serge was provided, made by Adelle with her aunt's assistance.

These days Adelle rose at an early hour to do the chamber work while her aunt got breakfast, then changed her dress, looked hurriedly over her lessons, gobbled her breakfast, and with her books and a tin lunch-box strapped together set forth to walk the mile and a half to the high school in order to save car-fare. There she performed her daily tasks in a perfunctory, dead manner, not uncommon. Once an exasperated teacher had demanded testily, —

"Miss Clark, don't you ever think?"

The timid child had answered seriously, —

"Yes, sometimes I think."

Whereat the class tittered and Adelle had a mild sensation of dislike for the irascible teacher, who reported in "teachers' meeting" that Adelle Clark was as nearly defective as a child of her years could be and be "all right," and that the grades ought not to permit such pupils to graduate into the high school. Indeed, algebra, Cæsar, and Greek history were as

nearly senseless to Adelle Clark as they could be. They were entirely remote from her life, and nothing of imagination rose from within to give them meaning. She learned by rote, and she had a poor memory. It was much the same, however, with English literature or social science or French, subjects that might be expected to awaken some response in the mind of a girl. The only subject that she really liked was dancing, which the gymnasium instructor taught. Adelle danced very well, as if she were aware of being alive when she danced. But even the athletic young woman who had the gymnasium classes reported that Adelle Clark was too dull, too lifeless, to succeed as a dancer or athletic teacher. These public guardians of youth may or may not have been right in their judgments, but certainly as yet the girl had not "waked up." . . .

Adelle's high-school career was interrupted in January, just as she had turned fifteen, by her aunt's sickness. For the first time in forty years, as the widow told the doctor, she had taken to her bed. "Time to make up for all the good loafing you have missed," the young doctor joked cheaply in reply, not realizing the hardship of invalidism, with a houseful of roomers, in a small back bedroom near enough to the center of activities for the sick woman to know all that happened without having the strength to interfere. It was only the grippe, the doctor said, advising rest, care, and food. It would be a matter of a week or two, and Adelle was doing

her best to take her aunt's place in the house and also nurse her aunt. But Mrs. Clark never left her bed until she was carried to the cemetery to be laid beside the Veteran in the already crowded lot. The grippe proved to be a convenient name to conceal a general breaking-up, due to years of wearing, ceaseless woman's toil without hope, in the disintegrating Clark atmosphere that ate like an acid into the consciousness even of plain Ellen Trigg, with her humble expectations from life.

Adelle was much moved by the death of her aunt, the last remaining relative that she knew of, though the few people who saw her at this time thought she "took it remarkably well." They interpreted her expressionless passivity to a lack of feeling. As a matter of fact, she had been much more attached to her aunt than to any one she had ever known. The plain woman, who had no pretensions and did her work uncomplainingly because it was useless to complain, had inspired the girl with respect and given her what little character she had. Ellen Clark was a stoic, unconsciously, and she had taught Adelle the wisdom of the stoic's creed. The girl realized fully now that she was alone in life, alone spiritually as well as physically, and though she did not drop tears as she came back to the empty Church Street house from the cemetery, — for that was not the thing to do now: it was to get back as soon as possible and set the house to rights as her aunt would have done so that the roomers should not be put out any further,—

her heart was heavy, nevertheless, and she may even have wondered sadly what was to become of her.

That was the question that disturbed the few persons who had any interest in the Clark women, — the manager of the livery-stable among them. It was plainly not the "proper thing" for the girl to continue long in a house full of men, and irresponsible men at that. Adelle was not aware what was the "proper thing," but she felt herself inadequate to keeping up the establishment unaided by her aunt, although that is what she would have liked to do, go on sweeping and making beds and counting out the wash and making up the bills, with or without school. But the liveryman hinted to her on her return from the funeral that she ought to go immediately to some friend's house, or have some married woman stay with her until her future had been determined upon. Adelle knew of no house where she could make such a visit, nor of any one whom she could invite to stay with her. It may seem incredible, as it did to Mr. Lovejoy, that "folks could live all their lives in Alton like the Clarks" and have no relatives or friends to lean upon in an emergency. But the truth is that when a family begins to go down in this world, after having some pretensions, it is likely to shed social relations very fast instead of acquiring new ones. A family in a settled social equilibrium (rarely the case in America), or one that is going up in the human scale, is apt to acquire connections, quite apart from the accidents of birth

and social gifts, because the mental attitude is an open and optimistic one, attracting to itself humanity instead of timidly withdrawing into itself. Strength attracts and weakness repels in the long run here as elsewhere. The Clarks, who had never been considerable or numerous, had in the course of three generations gradually lost their hold upon the complex threads of life, shiftlessly shedding relationships as the Veteran had done, or proudly refusing inferior connections as Addie had, until the family was left solitary in the person of this one fifteen-year-old girl, in whom the social habit seemed utterly atrophied. Of course, Adelle could have appealed to her aunt's pastor, but it never occurred to her to do that or to make use of any other social machinery. She went back to the Church Street house, occupied her old room, and for the next few days continued the catlike routine of her life as nearly as she could under the changed conditions.

Mr. Lovejoy, who continued to be the one most concerned in her welfare, induced her to write a crude little note to the "Washington Trust Company, Dear Sirs," notifying them of the demise of her aunt. The livery-stable man, who was a widower and not beyond middle age, which does not necessarily mean in his class that the wife is dead and buried, but merely permanently absent for one reason or another, might have thrown sentimental eyes upon the girl if she had been different, more of a woman.

"She'll likely enough be an heiress some of these days," he said to his employer, old John Pike.

Pike was an old resident of Alton and had known all the Clarks. He grunted as if he had heard that song before. "That's what they used to say of her mother, Addie Clark," he remarked, remembering Addie's superior air towards his son.

"Well," his manager continued, "I see that trust company's got its signs up all over the Field."

"'T ain't the first time there's been signs there," Pike retorted, eyeing a succulent cigar he had succeeded in extracting from an inner pocket, "nor the last either, I expect!"

"It looks as if they meant business this time."

"They can't get no title," Pike averred, for he banked with the River National, which was now quite bearish on Clark's Field. After a pause the old liveryman asked with a broad smile, — "Why don't you go in for the heiress, Jim?"

(Mr. Lovejoy was accounted "gay," a man to please the ladies.)

"Me! I never thought of it — she's nothing but a girl. The old one pleased me better — she was a smart woman!"

"The girl's got all the property, ain't she?"

"I suppose so."

"Well, then, you get two bites from the same cherry."

The manager made no advances to the girl, however, and for that we must consider Adelle herself as

chiefly responsible. For, as a woman, or rather the hope of a woman, she was uninteresting,—still a pale, passive, commonplace girl. What womanhood she might expect was slow in coming to her. Even with the halo of the Clark inheritance she could arouse slight amorous interest in any man. And thus Adelle's insignificance again saved her — shall we say? — from the mean fate of becoming the prey of this "roomer."

"No man will ever take the trouble to marry that girl," Mr. Lovejoy remarked to his employer, "unless she gets her fortune in hard cash." In which prophecy the widower was wrong.

IX

In a few days Mr. Gardiner called at the Church Street house on behalf of the trust company, to express to its ward its sympathy with her in her bereavement and to find out what her situation was, and her needs for the future. Adelle, sitting opposite the portly, bald-headed bank officer in the little front room, did not feel especially excited. She could not imagine what this visit might mean to her. She answered all his questions in a low, colorless voice, promptly enough and intelligently enough. Yes, her aunt was her only relative so far as she knew. No, she had made no plans — she would like to stay where she was if she could. It would be pretty hard to do everything alone, etc. As the trust officer, puzzled by the situation, continued to ply her with questions so that he might gain a clearer understanding of the circumstances, he became more and more perplexed. This was something quite out of his experience as a trust officer. He had supposed in making this call that he would have merely a perfunctory duty to perform, to ratify some obviously "sensible" plan for the future of the institution's ward. As he happened to have other business in Alton, he called personally instead of writing a note.

But now he discovered that this fifteen-year-old girl had absolutely no relatives, nor "proper friends," nor visible means of support except the income from "a third-class boarding-house," as he told the president of the trust company the next day. Clearly the company must do something for its ward, whose fortune they were now beginning to discuss in seven figures.

"She must have a suitable allowance."

That the good Mr. Gardiner saw at once. For to his thrifty, suburban soul the situation of a girl of fifteen with large prospects in a third-class rooming-house was truly deplorable. The dignities and proprieties of life were being outraged: it might affect the character of the trust company should it become known . . .

Rising at last from the dusty sofa where he had placed his large person for this talk, the trust officer said kindly, —

"We must consider what is best to be done, my girl. Can you come to the bank to see me next Monday?"

Adelle saw no reason why she should not go to see him Monday, as high school still seemed impossible with the house on her hands.

"Come in, then, Monday morning!" And the trust officer went homewards to confide his perplexity to his wife as trust officers sometimes do. It was a queer business, his. As trust officer he had once gone out to some awful place in Dakota to take

charge of the remains of a client who had got himself shot in a brawl, and brought the body back and buried it decently in a New England graveyard with his ancestors. He had advised young widows how to conduct themselves so that they should not be exposed to the wiles of rapacious men. Once even he had counseled matrimony to a client who was difficult to control and had approved, unofficially, of her selection of a mate. A good many of the social burdens of humanity came upon his desk in the course of the day's business, and he was no more inhuman than the next man. He was a father of a respectable family in the neighboring suburb of Chester. His habit was naturally to hunt for the proper formula for each situation as it arose and to apply this formula conscientiously. According to Mr. Gardiner, the duty of trust companies to society consisted in applying suitable formulas to the human tangles submitted to them by their clients. And in the present case Mrs. Gardiner suggested the necessary formula.

"Why don't you send the girl to a good boarding-school? You say she's fifteen and will have money."

"Yes, — some money, perhaps a good deal," her husband replied. Even in the bosom of his family, the trust officer was guarded in statement.

"How much?" Mrs. Gardiner demanded.

"What difference does it make how much, so long as we can pay her school bills?"

"It makes all the difference in the world!" the wife replied, with the superior tone of wisdom. "It

makes the difference whether you send her to St. Catherine's or Herndon Hall."

It will be seen that the trust officer's wife believed in that clause of the catechism that recommends contentment with that state of life to which Providence hath called one, and also that education should fit one for the state of life to which he or she was to be called by Providence. St. Catherine's, as the trust officer very well knew, was a modest institution for girls under the direction of the Episcopal Church, for which he served as trustee, where needy girls were cheaply provided with a "sensible" education, and "the household arts" were not neglected. In other words, the girls swept their rooms, made their own beds, and washed the dishes after the austere repasts, and the fee was correspondingly small. Whereas Herndon Hall — well, every one who has young daughters to launch upon the troubled sea of social life, and the ambition to give them the most exclusive companionship and no very high regard for learning, — at least for women, — knows all about Herndon Hall, by that name or some other equally euphonious. The fees at Herndon Hall were fabulous, and it was supposed to be so "careful" in its scrutiny of applicants that only those parents with the best introductions could possibly secure admission for their daughters. There were, of course, no examinations or mental tests of any kind.

Mrs. Gardiner, who had the ambition to send her

Alicia to Herndon Hall in due course, if the trust officer felt that he could afford the expense, opened her eyes when her husband replied to her question promptly, —

"I guess we'll figure on Herndon Hall."

Mrs. Gardiner inferred that the prospects of the trust company's ward must be quite brilliant, and she was prepared to do her part.

"Why don't you ask the girl out here over Sunday?" she suggested.

"Oh, she's a queer little piece," the trust officer replied evasively. "I don't believe you would find her interesting — it is n't necessary."

X

On her next visit to the splendid home of her guardian, Adelle was received by no less a person than the president of the trust company himself. In conference between the officers of the trust company it had been decided that the president, his assistant, and the trust officer should meet the girl, explain to her cautiously the nature of her prospects, and announce to her the arrangement for her education that they had made. But before recording this interview a word should be said about the present situation of Clark's Field.

The search that the bank had started for trace of the missing Edward S. and his heirs had resulted as futilely as the more feeble measures taken earlier by Samuel Clark. It is astonishing how completely people can obliterate themselves, give them a few years! There was absolutely no clue in all the United States for discovering this lost branch of the Alton Clarks, nor any reason to believe in their existence except the established fact that in 1848 Edward S., with a wife and at least three babies, had left Chicago for St. Louis. Although the Alton branch of the Clarks had shown no powers of multiplying, — their sole representative now being one little girl, — nevertheless there might be a whole colony of Clarks

somewhere interested in one half of the valuable Field. But more than fifty years had now passed since the final disappearance of Edward S. Clark, and the law was willing to consider means of ignoring all claims derived from him. It was the young assistant to the president, Mr. Ashly Crane, who worked out the details of the plan by which the restless title was to be finally "quieted" and the trust company enabled to dispose of its ward's valuable estate. Some of the officers and larger stockholders of the trust company were interested in an affiliated institution known as the Washington Guaranty and Title Company, which was prepared to do business in the guaranteeing of real-estate titles that were from one reason or another defective, which it is needless to say the majority are. For a reasonable sum this new company undertook to perfect the title to Clark's Field and then to insure purchasers and sellers against any inconvenient claims that might arise in the future, defending the title against all comers or in case of defeat assuming the losses. A very convenient institution in a society where the laws of property are so intricate and sacred! As a first step there was an extensive public advertisement for the missing heir or heirs, and then in due form a "judicial sale" of the property by order of court, after which the court pronounced the title to Clark's Field, so long clouded, to be "quieted." And woe to any one who might now dare to raise that restless spirit, be he Edward S. or any descendant of his!

This legal process of purification for Clark's Field being under way, the ingenius mind of Mr. Ashly Crane turned to the next problem, which was to dispose of the property advantageously. Manifestly the Washington Trust Company could not go into the real estate business on behalf of its ward and peddle out slices of her Field. That would not be proper, nor would it be especially profitable to the trust company. Mr. Crane, therefore, conceived the brilliant idea of forming a "Clark's Field Associates" corporation to buy the undeveloped tract of land from the trust company, who as guardian could sell it in whole or in part, and the new corporation might then proceed at its leisure to "develop" the old Field advantageously. For the benefit of the ignorant it may be bluntly stated here that this was merely a device for buying Adelle's property cheaply and selling it at a big profit, — not as crude a method as the other that the Veteran had almost fallen a victim to, because the Washington Trust Company was a "high-toned" institution and did not do things crudely; but in effect the device was the same.

The Clark's Field Associates was, therefore, incorporated and made an offer to the trust company for Clark's Field, — a fair offer in the neighborhood of a million dollars for the fifty-acre tract of city land. An obstacle, however, presented itself at this point, which in the end forced the Associates to modify their plan materially. The sale had to be approved

by the probate judge, the same Judge Orcutt who had once before befriended the unknown little girl. This time the judge examined the scheme carefully, even asked for a list of the Associates, which was an innocent collection of dummy names, and finally after conference with the trust officers insisted that the ward should reserve for herself one half the shares of the Clark's Field Associates, thus obtaining an interest in the possible benefits to be derived from their transactions. This was accordingly done, and the subscription to the stock of the new corporation by some of the capitalists who had been invited to "participate" in this juicy melon was cut down one half. They were not pleased by the act of the probate judge, but they accepted half the melon with good grace, assuring the judge through Mr. Crane that it was a highly speculative venture anyhow to put Clark's Field on the market, and the Associates might lose every penny they risked on it. The judge merely smiled. Poet that he was, he was by no means a fool in the affairs of this life.

When Adelle made her second visit to the Washington Trust Company, the scheme outlined above had not been perfected, but the legal process was far enough along to show promise of a brilliant fulfillment. The "queer little piece," as Mr. Gardiner described Adelle to his wife, had thus grown in importance within a brief year to such dignified persons as President West of the trust company and the wealthy stockholders who under various disguises were em-

barking upon the venture of the Clark's Field Associates. She was no longer merely the heiress of a legal mess: she was the means by which a powerful modern banking institution hoped to make for its inner circle of patrons a very profitable investment. So these gentlemen examined with curiosity the shy little person who slowly advanced across the carpeted floor of Mr. Gardiner's private office. The president himself rose from his chair and extended to Adelle a large, handsome, white hand with the polite greeting, —

"I am very glad to meet you, Miss Clark."

Adelle was more than ordinarily dumb. She had expected to see the trust officer alone as she had the other time, and in the presence of these strangers she took her one means of defense, — silence. The president, however, did the talking, and he talked more humanly than stuffy Mr. Gardiner. After expressing a deep sympathy with Adelle for the death of her aunt (of whose existence he had not been aware before this week), he easily shifted to the topic of Adelle's future. She must, of course, continue her education. Adelle replied that she should like to keep on with school, by which she meant the Alton Girls' High.

"Of course, of course," the president said easily. "Every girl should have the proper sort of education, and it is all the more important when her responsibilities and opportunities in life are likely to be increased by the possession of property."

But Adelle did not see how she could continue at the high school, now that her aunt had died and there was no one but herself to look after the roomers.

"Oh, very easily, very easily," the president thought. "How would you like to go to boarding-school, my dear?"

Adelle did not know all at once. She had read something about boarding-schools in story-books, but her conception of them was hazy. And she ventured to say out loud that they must take a "sight of money." The president of the trust company smiled for the benefit of his fellow-officers and proceeded to break the news of the rich expectations awaiting the timid little girl.

"I think we shall find enough money somehow to send you to a good school," he said gayly. "You know we have some money in the bank that will be yours, — oh, not a great deal at present, but enough to give you a good education, provided you don't spend too much on clothes, young lady."

This was a cruel jest, considering the quality of Adelle's one poor little serge dress which she had on, and she took it quite literally. While absorbing the idea that she must make her clothes go as far as possible, she made no remark.

"The property that we hold in trust for you until you shall become of age," the president resumed more seriously, "is not yet in such condition that we can tell you exactly how much it will amount to. But it is safe to say that all your reasonable needs

will be provided for. You'll never have to worry about money!"

He congratulated himself upon the happy phrasing of his announcement. It was cautiously vague, and yet must relieve the little girl of all apprehension or worry. Adelle made no response. For a Clark to be told that there was no need to worry over money was too astounding for belief.

"Now," said the president, who felt that he had done everything called for in the situation, "I will leave Mr. Gardiner to explain all the details to you. I hope you will enjoy your new school. . . . Whenever you are in the city, come in and see us!"

He shook the little girl's hand and went off with his good-looking young assistant, whose sharp glances had made Adelle shyer than ever. The two men smiled as they went out, as though they were saying to themselves, — "Queer little piece to have all that money!"

Mr. Gardiner took a great many words to explain to Adelle that her guardians had thought it best "after due consideration" to send her to an excellent boarding-school for young ladies — Herndon Hall. He rolled the name with an unction he had learned from his wife. Herndon Hall, it seemed, was in a neighboring State, not far from the great city of New York, and Adelle must prepare herself for her first long railroad journey. She would not have to take this alone, however, for Miss Thompson, the head teacher, had telephoned the trust company

that she herself would be in B—— on the following Friday and would escort Miss Clark to the Hall. Adelle could be ready, of course, by Friday.

Here Adelle demurred. There were the roomers — what would happen to them? And the old Church Street house — what was to become of the house? The banker waved aside these practical woman's considerations with a smile. Some one would be sent out from the trust company to look after all such unimportant matters. So, intimidated rather than persuaded, Adelle left the trust company building to prepare herself for her new life that was to begin on the following Friday noon.

They were accustomed to doing large things in the Washington Trust Company, and of course they did small things in a large way. But the little orphan's fate had really been the subject of more consideration than might possibly be inferred from the foregoing. The school matter had been carefully canvassed among the officers of the company. Mr. Gardiner had expressed some doubts as to the wisdom of sending Adelle at once to a large, fashionable school, even if she had the money to pay for it. Vague glimmerings of reason as to what really might make for the little girl's happiness in life troubled him, even after his wife's unhesitating verdict. But President West had no doubts whatever and easily bore down his scruples. He belonged to a slightly superior class socially and did not hold Herndon Hall in the same awe in which it was regarded in the Gardiner house-

hold. His daughters had friends who had got what education they had under Miss Annette Thompson and had married well afterwards and "taken a good position in society," which was really the important thing. Miss Thompson herself was of a very good New York family, — he had known her father who had been something of a figure in finance until the crash of ninety-three, — and the head of Herndon Hall was reputed to have an excellent "formative" influence upon her girls. And certainly that raw little specimen who had presented herself in his office needed all the "formative influence" she could get!

"We must give her the best," he pronounced easily, "for she is likely to be a rich woman some day."

It may be seen that President West agreed with Mrs. Gardiner's practical interpretation of the catechism. After his interview with Adelle he said to the trust officer, — "She needs — everything! Herndon Hall will be the very thing for her — will teach her what a girl in her position ought to know."

These remarks reveal on his part a special philosophy that will become clearer as we get to know better Miss Annette Thompson and Herndon Hall. The officers of the trust company felt that in sending their ward to this fashionable girls' school, they were doing their duty by her not only safely but handsomely, and thenceforth dismissed her from their thoughts, except when a subordinate brought them

at regular intervals a voucher to sign before issuing a check on behalf of Adelle. . . .

"Terribly crude little piece," the president of the trust company said of Adelle, thinking of his own vivacious daughters, who at her age had been complete little women of the world, and of all the other pretty, confident, voluble girls he met in his social life. "She has seen nothing of life," he said in extenuation, by which he meant naturally that Adelle Clark had never known how "nice people live," had never been to dancing-school or parties, or country clubs or smart dressmakers, and all the rest of what to him constituted a "suitable education" for a young girl who was to inherit money.

Meanwhile the "crude little piece" returned to her old home, somewhat shaken in mind by what had happened to her. It never entered her little head to argue with the august officers of the trust company, who stood to her as the sacred symbol of Authority. She must buy a trunk, pack it, and be at the Eclair Hotel in B—— by noon on the following Friday. Those were her orders. She looked wonderingly at the two hundred dollar check which Mr. Gardiner had given her for the expense of making herself ready. She had never before seen two hundred dollars. She knew only abstractly by the way of her arithmetic that such vast sums of money existed. And now she was expected to spend this fortune in

the space of three days upon herself. She folded up the slip of paper and tucked it carefully into her purse. When she presented it at one of the shops in the Square in payment for the cheap trunk she had selected, she started a local sensation. By the time the check had traveled from the clerk to the proprietor and thence to the River National Bank, which did not take long, it was known in that busy neighborhood that Clark's Field had made good at last! Here was ready money from it as evidence. Adelle Clark was in fact the heiress that her mother Addie had been in fancy.

The manager of the livery-stable may have had his regrets for the light manner in which he had treated old Pike's suggestion. He drove the girl himself into B—— on Friday with her new trunk strapped behind the closed carriage and touched his high hat when she dismounted before the flunky-guarded doors of the hotel. Adelle did not notice the hat business: she gave her old friend and best "roomer" her hand as she said good-bye, then slowly mounted the stone steps of the hotel. And that was the last that Church Street saw of the Clarks.

The liveryman, slowly retracing his way across the bridge to Alton, mused upon the picture that the little girl presented in her blue school suit, going up the steps of the Eclair Hotel. It was all like a stage story, he felt, and he thought long about the Clarks, whom he had known for two generations and about human fate generally. He summed up his reflections

in one enigmatic exclamation, — "That blamed old pasture!"

Adelle was an "heiress." Already she had been whisked away from Church Street to her new life. And all because of "that blamed old pasture" — otherwise Clark's Field.

XI

THE civilized inhabitants of our twentieth-century world are acquainted with many more kinds of torture than the ingenious managers of the Inquisition ever dreamed of in their most lurid nightmares. And of all these peculiarly modern forms of torture, perhaps the fashionable girls' school such as Herndon Hall takes first rank. A boys' school of the same order — conducted under the patronage of some holy saint's name — is often pretty bad, but it cannot rival the girls' school because women are more skillful in applying social torture and have a thousand ways of doing it to a man's or boy's one. Even among the softest and snobbiest of boys and masters there will always remain a residuum of male self-respect. If the newcomer, no matter how wrongly classed, proves that he has physical courage, or an aptitude for sports, or even a sunny, common-sense disposition, he will quickly escape from his probationary period of torture and become tolerated; while if a girl appears among her future schoolmates with an ill-made, unfashionable frock, or has manners that betray less sophistication than is to be expected, she may never survive the torture that begins on the instant and follows her relentlessly, in the schoolroom and out, until she either adapts herself to her

environment, becoming in turn a torturer, or is removed to a more congenial environment.

Adelle Clark presented to the little world of Herndon Hall a very vulnerable appearance when she arrived at the school on that Friday evening. She was still wearing the blue serge school dress that she and her aunt had made for her high-school début, also some coarse, faded brown stockings, and stout cheap shoes, not to mention an unmentionable hat of no style at all. She had taken that unfortunate joke of the trust company's president literally: she must not waste her substance upon clothes. Even without this inhibition she had scarcely the skill and the courage necessary to spend her two hundred dollars to advantage in three days. So she had bought herself a trunk, a few suits of much-needed heavy underwear, some handkerchiefs, and a coat that she had desired all winter, a thick, clumsy affair that completely enveloped her slight figure. Then her imagination of wants had given out.

The young teacher, who had taken Miss Thompson's place because of a sudden indisposition that attacked the head mistress, had made Adelle uncomfortably aware that something was wrong, but she put down her coolness and unsympathetic silence during their brief journey to the fact that Miss Stevens was a "teacher" and therefore felt "superior." "Rosy," as the older Hall girls called Miss Stevens, was not at all "superior" in her attitude to the girls. She dressed quite smartly and youthfully

and was their best confidante. But she had received a shock when she saw "that little fright" (as she reported to Miss Thompson) timidly sitting on the edge of her chair in the parlor of the Eclair Hotel. "Where can she come from?" she had said to herself; and later she had supplemented this query by thinking, "wherever it was, she had better go back to it as fast as she can — the little fright!"

Fortunately Adelle did not understand the glances that the elegant young women who were chattering in the Hall drawing-room before dinner cast upon her when she was introduced to her schoolmates. Nor did she immediately comprehend the intention of the insults and tortures to which she was submitted during the ensuing year. She felt lonely: she missed her aunt and even the "roomers" more than she had expected to. But gradually even into her dumb mind there penetrated a sense of undeserved ignominy, not clearly localized, because she did not possess a sufficient knowledge of sophisticated manners to realize the refined nature of her torture. She had merely an accumulating sense of pain and outrage. She was not happy in Herndon Hall: she did not know it until afterwards, but that was the plain truth. Nobody wanted her there, and she knew enough to understand it. Even a cat or a dog has sufficient social sense for that!

Externally Herndon Hall was all that was charming and gracious — a much more beautiful and re-

fined home than Adelle had ever seen. It occupied one of those spacious old manorial houses above the Hudson, where the river swept in a gracious curve at the foot of the long lawn. An avenue of old trees led up to the large stone house from the high road half a mile away. There were all sorts of dependencies, — stables, greenhouses, and ornamental gardens of the old-fashioned kind, — which were carefully kept up so that the Hall resembled a large private estate, such as it was meant to be, rather than a school. It was popularly supposed that Herndon Hall had once been the country-place of Miss Thompson's people, which was not true; but that shrewd woman of the world, recognizing all the advantages of an aristocratic background, kept up the place on a generous footing, with gardeners, stablemen, and many inside servants, for which, of course, the pupils paid liberally. The Hall was run less as a school than as a private estate. Many of the girls had their own horses in the stable, and rode every pleasant afternoon under the care of an old English riding-master, who was supposed to have been "Somebody in England" once. (Later on, when the motor became popular the girls had their own machines, but that was after Adelle's time.) There was lawn tennis on the ample lawns, and this with the horseback riding and occasional strolls was the only concession to the athletic spirit of the day.

The schoolrooms were not the feature of the Hall

that one might expect. They were confined to a small wing in the rear, or the basement, and there were no laboratories or other paraphernalia of modern education. The long drawing-room, with its recessed windows facing the river, was hung with "old masters" — a few faded American protraits and some recent copies of the Italian school. It was also furnished luxuriously and had books in handsome bindings. But educationally, in any accepted sense of the word, Herndon Hall was quite negligible, as all such institutions for the care of the daughters of the rich must be, as long as the chief concern of its patrons is to see their daughters properly married and "taking a good position in society." Adelle quickly perceived that, though she had been reckoned a dull pupil in the Alton Girls' High School, she had much more than enough book knowledge to hold her own in the classes of her new school. If it is difficult to say what is a good education for a boy whose parents can afford to give him "the best," it is almost impossible to solve the educational riddle for his sister. She must have good manners, an attractive person, and, less clearly, some acquaintance with literature, music, and art, and one modern language to enable her to hold her own in the social circles that it is presumed she will adorn. At least that was the way Miss Thompson looked at the profound problem of girls' education. She herself was accounted "accomplished," a "brilliant conversationalist," and "broadly cultured," with the confi-

dent air that the best society is supposed to give, and her business was to impart some of this polish to her pupils. "Conversation," it may be added, was one of the features of Herndon Hall.

Art, music, and literature did not seem to awaken Adelle's dormant mind any more than had the rigorous course of the public schools. She did as most of the girls did, — nothing, — coming unprepared day after day to her recitations to be helped through the lessons by the obliging teachers, who professed to care little for "mere scholarship" and strove rather to "awaken the intelligence" and "stir the spirit," "educate the taste," and all the rest of the fluff with which an easy age excuses its laziness. The girls at Herndon Hall impudently bluffed their teachers or impertinently replied that they "did n't remember," just like their papas and future husbands when they were cornered on the witness stand by inconvenient questions about shady transactions.

The tone of the school was distinctly fashionable, also idle and luxurious, which was what its patrons desired. Many of the mothers and other female relatives of the girls, besides the "old girls" themselves, ran up to the school from New York, which was not far away, bringing with them a rich atmosphere of jewels, clothes, and gossip that seemed to hang about the large drawing-room of the stately stone mansion. The more fortunate pupils found frequent excuses for getting down to the gay city for the theater and parties, and there were besides boys

from a neighboring college, with parties to the races, all discreetly chaperoned, of course.

Miss Thompson was at great pains to maintain what the "old Hall girls" called the "tone of Herndon," so that careful mothers and fathers should have no hesitation in confiding to it their daughters from fear that they might encounter "undesirable associates." In all the years of its existence Miss Thompson had never admitted a member of a certain religious creed. Yet latterly there had been rumors that the Hall was not what it once had been. There were too many "Western" girls: some said Herndon was getting "Pittsburghy." There were certain lively daughters of Western millionaires, two in especial from the great State of California whom Adelle later on was thrown with, who did not add to the exclusive atmosphere of the Hall.

The path of the manager of a fashionable school is by no means an easy one. It is, in fact, as Miss Thompson had found, more difficult than the famous eye of the needle. For if she were so scrupulous as to bar out all the daughters of new wealth, she was in danger of lacking that material support without which Herndon Hall could not be maintained. And if she admitted too freely rich "Western girls" whose parents were "nobodies," but were keenly anxious to have their daughters become "somebodies," she was in danger of watering her wine to the point where it would lose all its potency. A constant equilibrium between the good-

family class and the merely rich must be maintained if the school was to preserve its position. And so it can be understood why the proprietor and the teachers of Herndon Hall carefully scrutinized Adelle on her first appearance. Would she merely water their precious wine? If so she must be very rich, indeed, to compensate for her diluting presence. Miss Thompson had accepted her on the strength of President West's personal letter, and it did not take her long to discover that she had made a grave mistake. Adelle was all water!

She folded up her napkin at dinner in the thrifty manner of the Church Street house. She ate her soup from the point of her spoon, and the wrong spoon, and she wore her one dress from the time she got up in the morning until she went to bed. If it had not been for the solid social position of President West and the prestige of the trust company, whose ward she was, it is probable that Adelle would have been sent packing by the end of the second day. As it was, the head mistress said to Miss Stevens, with a sigh of commendable Christian resignation, — "We must do our best for the poor little thing — send her in to me after dinner."

When Adelle entered the private sitting-room of the head mistress, she expected to be given directions about her classes. Not at all. Miss Thomson, who still seemed to be suffering from the indisposition that Adelle found frequently attacked her, looked her over coldly as she sipped her coffee and

remarked that she "must have something fit to wear at once." She put the little girl through a careful examination as to the contents of her trunk, with the result that in a few days Adelle's wardrobe was marvelously increased with a supply of suitable frocks for all occasions, slippers, lingerie, and hats, and the bill was sent to the trust company, which honored it promptly without question, not knowing exactly what a girl ought to cost. Having equipped her pupil "decently," Miss Thompson observed "that she did n't have an idea how to wear her clothes," but she trusted to the spirit of the school to correct that deficiency. Next she sent Adelle to the dentist and had her teeth straightened, — a painful operation that dragged through several years at great cost of time and money, and resulted finally in a set of regular teeth that looked much like false ones. Having provided for her outside, the teachers turned their attention to her manners and "form," and here lay Adelle's worst mental torture. That young teacher, "Rosy" Stevens, who had fetched her from B ——, had this task. "Rosy," who was only thirty, was supposed to be having "a desperate affair of the heart" with an actor, which she discussed with the older girls. She was the most popular chaperone in the school because she was "dead easy" and connived at much that might have resulted scandalously. "Rosy" shared the girls' tastes for sweets, dress, and jewelry, and smuggled into the Hall, not candy — because that was openly per-

mitted in any quantity — but forbidden "naughty" novels.

Miss Stevens had the deadliest weapon at her command that Adelle had ever encountered — sarcasm. "My dear girl," she would say before a tableful of girls, in the pityingly sweet tone of an experienced woman of the world to a vulgar nobody, "how can you speak like that!" (This when Adelle had emitted the vernacular grunt in answer to some question.) "You are not a little ape, my dear." Then she would mimic in her dainty drawl Adelle's habit of speech, which, of course, set all the girls at the table tittering. Adelle naturally did not love "Rosy," but she was helpless before her darts. The other teachers generally ignored her presence, treating her with the perfect politeness of complete indifference. Once, soon after her arrival, the child was caught talking with one of the housemaids in the upper corridor, and was severely reprimanded. She had merely sought for a ray of human sunlight, but she was told that young women of her station in life were never familiar with servants. In a word, Adelle was more nearly encased in an airproof lining at Herndon Hall than ever before, and remained for another two years the pale, furtive, undeveloped child she was when she first came. Some cures, it seems, are so radical that they paralyze the nervous system and develop rather than cure the disease. Such was the case of Adelle in Herndon Hall. For nearly two years she sneaked about its comfortable premises, a silent,

forlorn, miserable little being, frightened at what she could not understand, ready for a blow, but not keen enough to put up a protecting hand. The verdict of the school was that "the little fright of a Clark girl" was too stupid to learn anything. As one girl said to "Rosy," — "The Clark girl must have piles of money to be here at all."

And the teacher replied, — "She'll need it all, every cent, she's so deadly common."

Let no reader suppose that Herndon Hall in which Adelle was suffering her martyrdom is typical of all fashionable girls' boarding-schools. In a real sense nothing in this life is sufficiently universal to be considered typical. There are to-day many schools that have some of the characteristics of Herndon Hall, though fortunately fewer than there were when Adelle got her education. But even at that time there were many excellent schools for girls where the teachers made sincere efforts to teach the girls something, where the girls were human and well-bred, and the teachers were kind and sympathetic and would not have tolerated such conduct as went on almost openly in this "exclusive" establishment, nor such brutal treatment as the girls dealt out to Adelle.

Herndon Hall, with its utterly false standards of everything that concerns woman's being, was the fruit of those ideals that have obtained about women, their position and education, for many cen-

turies. And Herndon Hall was Adelle's accident — the fate to which the trust officers in all good will consigned her. There always is and must be, even in our own enlightened age of feminist movements, a Herndon Hall — perhaps more than one. Parents who believe that marriage and "a suitable position in society" are all there is in life for a woman will always create Herndon Halls.

XII

If the history of Clark's Field and those whom it concerned were an idealistic or romantic story, striving to present the world as it ought to be rather than as it often happens to be, our little heroine should at this crisis awaken from her apathy. Her spark of a soul should be touched by some sympathetic agent, — one of the teachers who had lived sadly and deeply, or some generous exception among her school-fellows, who would extend a protecting wing to the persecuted girl. No doubt even in Herndon Hall there were such who might have answered at a pinch to regenerate Adelle and start her forth on a series of physical if not spiritual adventures that would be exhilarating to the reader. But nothing of the sort came into her life at this period. She was too unpromising to arouse the incipient Samaritans.

There was, of course, the religious or rather the church side of the school in which Adelle might have taken refuge. This consisted of attending the small Episcopal Church in the neighboring village, where the excellent rector, a married man and the father of daughters, often directed his discourses at the Hall pews. But Adelle was no more religiously minded than her worldly little associates. There was nothing in the service of ritualistic beauty to

arouse a latent sensuousness — nothing of color or form or sound. Religion in fact had even less to do with daily life in Herndon Hall, in spite of weekly church and morning prayers, than it had in the Church Street house. There was more or less talk about "the Church" and "the spiritual life," but, as Adelle soon perceived, the girls lied, cheated in their lessons, spoke spitefully of one another — did even worse — quite as people acted in the world outside. Even the teachers, she learned after a time, failed to connect the religious life with their personal conduct. "Rosy," the teacher with whom she had most to do the first year, aimed to be the companion rather than the guide of the girls in their frequent escapades. Miss Thompson herself, it was whispered among the older girls, suffered from something worse than "neuralgia" in those frequent attacks which incapacitated her. As for the general morale of the school, even more serious things could be said if it were not for fear that the authorities of Herndon Hall and others of a similar mind might ban this tale as unfit for "nice girls" to peruse, although they tolerate the deeds themselves. Of such matters, to be sure, Adelle knew nothing until later, for at first she was so much an outsider that she was not allowed to look beneath the decorous surface, and experienced merely petty attacks of selfishness and snobbery.

She might never have got completely beneath the surface if she had not been obliged to spend all her vacations at the Hall. The teachers were then off

duty, when they were not visiting at the homes of their pupils, and spoke and acted before the silent girl quite freely because they considered her lacking mentally and harmless. And she was allowed to converse occasionally with the house servants, who sometimes spoke openly about Herndon Hall. She knew that the teachers had lively parties where wine was served freely. Adelle was supposed to be in her room on the third floor when these festivities were in progress, but she could not be unaware of them. And once she encountered "Rosy" in a curious state of exaltation that filled her with fear. At that time she did not understand the working of wine upon the spirit. . . .

She was, of course, often dull and lonely, especially the first summer in the empty house above the steaming river. It was too hot much of the time to do more than loll about the porches with a book or some sewing. She tried to do a little gardening because she liked flowers, and occasionally took walks alone into the country. It was a lazy, unwholesome existence, and she was surprised to find herself looking forward to the day when her tormentors would return and the routine of school life would begin once more. During this first long vacation Mrs. Gardiner made a feeble effort "to do something" for the trust company's ward. She asked Adelle for a week's visit in the mountains, and shy as she was Adelle longed for that week at the end of August as an escape from prison. But, alas, the Gardiner children inoppor-

tunely contracted some minor disease and Mrs. Gardiner wrote to recall her invitation. Providence seemed determined to do nothing more for Adelle at present.

The only other event of this twelve weeks was the letter she wrote to Mr. Lovejoy, the manager of the livery-stable in Alton. This was the result of an acute attack of loneliness when, after a thorough canvass of her friends, Mr. Lovejoy's name was the only one she could think of. She told him in her little letter about the school, said she missed the Church Street house, and asked specifically after certain "roomers." But she never received a reply. Whether the teachers suppressed Mr. Lovejoy's letter, or he had never received Adelle's, or, which was more likely, he was not sufficiently stimulated by the girl's epistle to answer her, she never knew. After that one attempt Adelle made no effort to reach back into her past: she accepted the present with that strange stoicism that young people sometimes exhibit.

At last when she had laboriously completed "Little Dorrit" and was beginning heavily upon the "Christmas Stories," the vacation came to an end and the Herndon girls returned for the fall term. Adelle was now a familiar figure to them, and therefore less interesting to snub. She was merely ignored, which did not hurt her. Whatever might have been her slender expectations of happiness, she must have long since given up any idea of accomplishing them like other girls. She was becoming a perfect small realist, con-

tent to take the facts of life for what they seemed. She watched without conscious pain or envy the flurry of greetings and boastful exchanges of experiences among the girls the first day of their return to school. She was either ignored or pased by with a polite nod and a "Hello, Adelle! Did you have a good time with Rosy?" — while the other girls gathered into knots and resorted to each others' rooms for deeper confidences. It was an old story now, being an outsider, and the small, unobtrusive girl of fifteen was fast sinking into a state of apathy — the most dangerous condition of all.

The new school year, however, brought her something — the arrival of a friend. As she was dawdling with a book in a corner of the drawing-room, watching a circle of "old girls" who were whispering and giggling over some vacation tale, a small voice came to her ears, —

"Is it that you also are strange here?"

Adelle was so surprised at being addressed, also at the foreign-looking girl who had spoken, that she did not answer, and the other continued with a smile on her singularly red lips, —

"I speak English ver—ver badly!"

"What is your name?" Adelle asked bluntly.

"Diane Merelda," the girl said in a liquid tone.

"What?" Adelle asked with puckered brows.

"Di-ane Merel-da," came more slowly in the same soft tone. "See!" She took with a gracious movement the pencil from Adelle's hand and wrote on a

piece of paper the name, and added beneath in small letters "F. de M."

"Oh," said Adelle, "what do those mean?" pointing to the letters beneath.

"Fille de Marie — a daughter of the Blessed Virgin," the girl translated sweetly.

Adelle looked at the stranger in bewilderment. She was a dainty person, as small as Adelle, but a perfectly formed young woman. Her black hair was tightly braided over her small head, in a fashion then strange, and her face was very pale, of a natural pallor emphasized by the line of carmine lips. Her eyes were black and wide. She smiled gently, contentedly, upon Adelle. Altogether she was an unusual phenomenon to the young American. She explained herself volubly if not fluently in broken English, pausing every now and then with a charming birdlike toss of her little black head and, "You say so, no?" — waiting for Adelle's nod to dash on into further intricacies of speech.

Miss Diane Merelda, as she told Adelle Clark, was the daughter of a wealthy Mexican whose acquaintance with Americans had so liberalized him that he preferred to educate his children in the States and in schools not under Catholic control. Señorita Diane had left her father's home in Morelos earlier than intended, however, because of the outbreak of an insurrection in the province, in which her father was concerned. As his haçienda near Morelos was not safe on account of brigands, Señor Merelda

had sent his wife and daughter abroad to join his sons, and so Diane had reached Herndon Hall by the way of Madrid, Paris, and New York, after a summer spent with relatives in Spain. Her mother had learned of Herndon Hall from a chance traveling companion, and in some way had induced Miss Thompson to waive her strict requirements for admission.

From her way of dressing her hair to her pointed slippers and broken English, the little Mexican was even more markedly different from the Herndon type than Adelle, and though the older girls knew enough of the world to recognize a distinction in differences, Diane did not seem to. She was gracious to all, and Adelle happened to be the first girl she could speak to while she waited for her mother, who was closeted with Miss Thompson. Here was Adelle's chance, although she did not recognize it as such. They talked for an hour, rather Diane talked and Adelle did her best to understand the rapid, lisping, birdlike notes of the foreigner. She learned that Diane had a brother in a school near St. Louis, another in a technical college, and still another now in Germany. The Merelda family seemed much scattered, but that did not disturb the little Mexican.

"We shall all be back in Morelos sometime!" She added sweetly, "Perhaps you will come to Mexico with me, no?"

Adelle soon learned all about Madrid, the Spanish relatives, the sight of the young King of Spain

at San Sebastian, the trip to Lourdes which the family had taken in hope that the holy cure might help her mother's lame knee, and too much else to relate here. Señorita Diane was exceedingly loquacious: her little tongue wove in and out of the new idiom with surprising facility, forever wagging in a low, sweet babble of nothings. Adelle, as has been sufficiently indicated, absorbed passively the small and the large facts of life. Diane was like a twittering bird on a tiny twig that shook with the vehemence of her expression. She reacted instinctively to every stimulus from a new toothbrush to the sight of a motor-car, and she prefered not to react alone. Thus Adelle did more talking of her blunt, bald kind to her new friend than she had accomplished hitherto all her life. She explained Herndon Hall literally to the stranger, while Diane exclaimed in three languages.

The presence of the little Mexican in the school did much to ameliorate Adelle's lonely lot this second year. She formed a connecting link of a sort between her and the rest of her schoolmates, who liked the foreigner. Diane reported fully to Adelle what the other girls were doing, — how Betty Langton was in love with an actor and for this reason went to New York almost every week on one excuse or another; how the two Californians, Irene and Sadie Paul, had a party in their room the night before, with wine, much wine. Diane shook her head wonderingly over all these doings of "the Ameri-

cans." American girls seemed to her all "queer," and, though she did not say so, rather vulgar and underbred. Oddly enough she put Adelle apart in this sweeping judgment, for she was not able to appreciate Adelle's common accent and primitive manners. Adelle did not snub nor condescend nor do "naughty" things, and so, from the Mexican's standard, a simple and somewhat antiquated one, Adelle was a lady. Diane concluded that she must be poor and for that reason the other girls treated her badly. To be poor was no disgrace in the eyes of the Mexican. Many of the best people she had known, including her Spanish relatives, were dreadfully poor, but none the less to be considered. Poverty was a matter of God's will in the delightful Latin sense of the word, not a matter of inherited personal disgrace as in a free, Anglo-Saxon democracy.

"I do not like your America," she said gravely to Adelle after she had been a couple of months in the school. "Not to live in always when I am married."

"What's the matter with America?" Adelle asked.

"It is all money, money," the little Mexican replied. "You come to see nothing in your heart but dollars, dollars, dollars. It makes the heart heavy."

Adelle, who had never looked at the world in this light, thought Diane a little "queer." Nevertheless they were good friends as school-girl friendships go and consoled each other for what they lacked in their common environment.

Another event of this new year was perhaps even more momentous to Adelle than the arrival of the little Mexican, and that was the visit paid to her shortly after her sixteenth birthday by one of the trust company's officers. It was Mr. Ashly Crane — the new trust officer, in fact — who rode up the winding avenue from the river road in one of the noisy, new-fangled motors that announced itself from afar. Mr. Gardiner, it seemed, had been retired from his position as trust officer and was no longer to be the human symbol of Adelle's wardship to the trust company. The new trust officer had not of design chosen the occasion of the ward's birthday to pay her a visit. Happening to be in the neighboring city of Albany with a few hours on his hands before he could make connections for the West, he bethought himself of the trust company's young charge and ran out to look over the school and incidentally Adelle. No one from the Washington Trust Company had ever paid its ward a visit, — Adelle was the only unvisited girl in the school, — but Mr. Ashly Crane was the kind of vigorous young banker, not yet quite forty, who could be depended upon to "keep in personal touch" with all his clients. That is why, probably, he had superseded Mr. Gardiner, who had a staid habit of relying upon printed forms and the mail.

Mr. Ashly Crane was a good-looking, keen American banker, who paid strict attention to his manners, clothes, and habits. He was ambitious, of course,

and had been so busily climbing upwards from his first clerkship in the trust company that he had not yet married. Very likely he felt that with his ever-widening horizon of prospects it would not be wise to anchor himself socially to any woman, who might prove to be a drag upon his future. He was still well within the marriageable limits and looked even younger. Nothing so well preserves youth as Success, and of this tonic Mr. Ashly Crane had had an abundance. Mr. Crane, it should not be thought, had armed himself with a bunch of enormous red roses from the leading florist of Albany and set forth upon his expedition with any formulated plot against the little heiress who was the company's ward. He recalled her in fact as a most unattractive, gawky little girl, who must have changed inconceivably for the better if she were to interest Mr. Ashly Crane personally. But the Clark estate, under the skillful method of treatment for which he was largely responsible, was growing all the time, and thanks to the probate judge's precaution, Adelle would ultimately reap rather more than one half of the earnings of the Clark's Field Associates. Already her expenses, represented by the liberal checks to Herndon Hall, were a mere nothing in the total of the income that went on rolling up in conservative bonds and stocks that were safely stowed away in the vaults under the Washington Trust Company. It seemed only proper that the sole representative of so much tangible property should be accorded every

consideration by those legally constituted her servants and guardians. Single motives are more rarely found in life than in art, and Mr. Ashly Crane's motives this fine April morning were quite typically hybrid.

Whatever incipient anticipations of the girl herself he might have entertained during his ride were immediately dissipated as soon as Adelle entered the drawing-room from the class whence she had been summoned. She was a little larger, perhaps, than he remembered her, but essentially the same awkward, homely child, and she was now wearing an ugly harness upon her teeth that further disfigured her. Mr. Ashly Crane was an observant man, and he became at once merely the business man, solely intent upon performing his duty and getting back to Albany in time to catch his train. He presented his roses, which Adelle took from him clumsily and allowed to lie across her lap, while with legs spread apart to sustain their burden she listened to what he had to say. Mr. Crane explained to her briefly Mr. Gardiner's retirement and his own recent elevation to the post of being her nominal guardian, and then inquired if everything was satisfactory in the school. When Adelle replied, yes, she guessed so, he observed that the Hall was prettily located above the river with a good view and that a girl ought to have a fine time in such a pleasant country.

"What do you do with yourself when you are not studying?" he concluded in a patronizing tone.

"Oh," Adelle responded vaguely, "I don't know. Nothing much — read some and take walks."

The new trust officer was enough of a human being to realize the emptiness of this reply, and for a few moments was puzzled. This was a woman's job, rather than a man's, he reflected sagely. However, being a man he must do the best he could to win the girl's confidence, and after all Herndon Hall had the highest reputation.

"They treat you right?" he inquired bluntly.

The girl murmured something in assent, because she could think of nothing better to say. It was quite impossible for her to phrase the sense of misery and indignity that was nearly constant in her mind.

"The teachers are kind?" the trust officer pursued.

"I guess so," she said, with a dumb look that made him uncomfortable.

He rose nervously and walked across the room. As he gazed out of the open window at the distant prospect across the "Noble River" (so described in the dainty leaflet sent forth by the school) "from the ivy-shrouded old stone Hall," he caught sight of a party of girls riding off on horseback for their daily excursion. That gave him an idea.

"You ride, too?" he inquired, turning again to the girl.

"No, I have n't any horse," she replied simply. "You have to have your own horse."

"But you can have a horse if you want to ride," the trust officer hastily remarked. "Riding is a very good exercise, and I should think it would be fine in this country."

Here was something tangible that a man could get hold of. The girl looked pale and probably needed healthful exercise. If other girls had their own horses, she could have one. It was really ridiculous how little she was spending of her swelling income. And he proceeded at once to take up this topic with Miss Thompson, who presently arrived upon the scene. Mr. Ashly Crane was much more successful in impressing the head mistress of Herndon Hall with the importance of the ward of the Washington Trust Company than in probing the heart of the lonely little girl. He gave the elegant Miss Thompson to understand clearly that Miss Adelle Clark was to have every advantage that money could buy, not merely music and art as extras, but horses, — he even put it in the plural, — a groom, and if she wanted it a private maid, which he was told was never permitted. Miss Thompson quickly gathered from his tone and his words that Miss Adelle Clark's expectations were such as to insure her the most careful consideration in every respect, and if Herndon Hall could not provide her with all the advantages to which wealth was entitled, her guardians would quickly remove her from the school. Miss Thompson accompanied the trust officer to the door out of earshot of Adelle and assured him haughtily that

Herndon Hall which sheltered a Steigman of Philadelphia, a Dyboy of Baltimore, not to mention a Miss Saltonsby from his own city, knew quite as well as he what was fitting under the circumstances. However, they shook hands as two persons from the same world and parted in complete understanding. Adelle had already slipped off with her armful of roses.

XIII

FROM the moment when she emerged upon the corridor that led to the schoolrooms with that huge bunch of American Beauty roses in her arms, a new period of her school life began. The girls, of course, had seen from their desks the arrival of the motor-car and its single occupant, — a Man, — and the older girls who had peeked into the drawing-room reported that Mr. Ashly Crane was a very smart-looking man, indeed. When a woman first receives flowers from a man, an event of importance in her existence has happened. Señorita Diane, who was an incorrigible sentimentalist, went into ecstasies over the roses and at once whispered about the school that they were the fruit of an admirer, not of a mere relative. Miss Thompson talked to her teachers, especially to "Rosy," and it became known throughout the Hall that the ugly duckling was undoubtedly Somebody, and she was treated thereafter with more consideration. If the trust company had thought to take notice of its ward's existence earlier in her school career, Adelle might have been saved a very disagreeable year of her life.

In due time there arrived a beautiful saddle-horse and a groom, both selected with judgment by Mr.

Ashly Crane and charged to the ward's account. The appearance of the blooded mount did more than anything else to acquaint Adelle with the meaning and the power of money. In many subtle ways she began to feel a change in the attitude of her world towards her, and naturally related it immediately to the possession of this unknown power. A dangerous weapon had thus been suddenly placed in her hands. She could command respect, attention, even consideration, thanks to this weapon — money. It was merely human that as the years went on the silent child, who had absorbed many unhappy impressions of life before discovering this key to the world, should become rapidly cynical in her use of her one great weapon of offense and defense. The next few years of her life was the period when she exercised herself in the use of this weapon, although she did not become really proficient in its control until much later.

A suitable habit was quickly provided, and she set forth each pleasant day with that little group of older girls who enjoyed this privilege, accompanied always by her own groom, who was a well-trained servant and effaced himself as nearly as possible. The California girls rode, and that Miss Dyboy of Baltimore, but the little Mexican, though she had ridden all her life, had no horse, and as long as affairs continued unsettled in Morelos was not likely to have one. When Adelle discovered this fact, she did not play the part of the unselfish heroine, I am

sorry to say, and allow Diane to use her horse even on those days when she did not care to ride (as of course she would do in a well-conducted story). Instead she merely wrote a little letter to Mr. Crane at the Washington Trust Company, telling him rather peremptorily to send her another horse. Somewhat to her surprise the second horse arrived in due season, and now she lent the beast to her little friend, carefully refraining from giving up her title to him. For a second time she felt the sweet sense of unlimited power in response to desire. She wrote her letter as Aladdin rubbed his magic lamp, and straightway her desire became fact! It was modern magic. This time it happened that her desire was a generous one and brought her the approval as well as the envy of the small social world at the Hall. But that was purely accidental: the next time she should try her lamp, as likely as not the cause might be purely selfish. As a matter of fact she soon discovered that, by distributing her favors and lending her extra horse to a number of schoolmates, she could enlarge her circle of influence and consideration. So the little Mexican by no means had all the rides.

Horseback riding was a beneficial pleasure in more than one way. Adelle, of course, profited from the exercise in the open air: she began to grow slowly and to promise womanhood at some not distant day. It also brought her into close relations with some of the leading girls, who had thus far ignored her ex-

istence; among them the breezy California sisters, "the two Pols," as they were known in school. These girls profited by Adelle's groom to dispense with the chaperonage of the old riding-master, and before long Adelle learned why this arrangement was made. In their long expeditions across country, with the discreet groom well in the rear, the girls put their heads together in the most intimate gossip, from which Adelle learned much that completed her knowledge of life. Most of this was innocent enough, though some was not, as when one afternoon, when "the Pols" judged that Adelle was a "good sport," they led the way to a remote road-house where a couple of men were waiting evidently by appointment. One of them, a fair-haired, overdressed young man, Adelle was given to understand was Sadie Pol's "artist" friend. She herself was sent back to entertain the groom while the two sisters went into the road-house with their "friends." Conduct, even conduct that came near being vice, was largely meaningless to Adelle: she silently observed. She had no evil impulses herself, very few impulses, in fact, of any kind. But she was the last person to tell tales, and "the two Pols," having tested her and pronounced her "safe," she was allowed to see more and went more than once to the rendezvous at the quiet road-house. In this way she raised herself nearly to a plane of equality with the leaders of the school. Indeed, it was Adelle who assisted Irene Paul to escape from the Hall one winter night, and stayed awake

far into the morning in order to let the girl in. But that was a year later. . . .

When Adelle discovered the power of her magic lamp, she was generous with her pocket-money, ordering and buying whatever the older girls desired. In this way she rapidly attained favor in the Hall, where few even of the richer girls could procure money so easily as the ward of the Washington Trust Company. "Get Adelle to do it," or "Adelle will dig up the money," "Ask Adelle to write her bank," became familiar expressions, and Adelle never failed to "make good." It is safe to say that if contact with any sort of human experience gives education, Adelle was being educated rapidly, although she was completely ignorant of books and as nearly illiterate as a carefully protected rich girl can be. Before Nature had completed within her its mission, Adelle was cognizant of many kinds of knowledge, some of which included depravity. For in the exclusive, protected, rich world of Herndon Hall she had met everything she might have encountered in the Alton Girls' High and a good deal more beside.

By the end of this second year she was not much happier, perhaps, but she was perfectly comfortable at the Hall and thoroughly used to her new environment. The blonde Irene had given her a diploma, —

"Dell's all right — she's a good little kid."

XIV

THAT summer she did not have to mope by herself in the empty Hall. The little Mexican carried her away for a long visit to her distant home. The trouble in Morelos had temporarily subsided, so that Señor Merelda felt that it was safe to gather his large family at the haçienda. The journey, which the two girls made alone as far as St. Louis, where Diane's elder brother met them, was the first view of the large world that Adelle had ever had. They were both filled with the excitements of their journey so that even Adelle's pale cheeks glowed with a happy sense of the mystery of living. This ecstasy was somewhat broken by the presence of Carlos, a gentlemanly enough young man; but Adelle was afraid of all men. She failed also to assimilate the strange sights that she encountered south of St. Louis. The journey became a jumble in her memory of heat and red sunsets and dirty Indians and stuffy dining-cars. But Morelos itself made a more lasting impression upon her little mind. There was, first of all, the strange landscape, dominated by the snowy peak of Popocatepetl, the sugar-fields, and the drowsy languor of the little town, and then there was the family life of the Mereldas at the haçienda. That was both delightful and queer to Ad-

elle. Instead of one "queer" person to whom she had become accustomed, there were half a dozen odd human beings in the persons of Señor and Señora Merelda and the older boys and girls. They all spoke all the time as did Diane, about everything and nothing. They seemed to care warmly for one another, yet quarreled like children over nothings. Young Carlos, who was at a technical school, made violent love to Adelle. It was the first time that a boy had looked at her twice even under compulsion, and it bewildered and troubled Adelle until she perceived that it was all a joke, a "queer" way of expressing courtesy to a stranger.

"It would not be polite," Diane explained demurely, "if Carlos did not make the bear to my friend."

So Adelle got over her fright when the youth uttered strange speeches and tried to take her hand. She even felt a faint pleasure in thus becoming of a new importance.

"Of course," Diane remarked sagely, "Carlos cannot marry yet — he is still in school. But he will marry soon — why not you? . . . You are so very rich. I should like Carlos to marry a rich girl and my friend, too . . ." And with a little sigh, — "It must be pleasant to be so rich as you!" From which it will be seen that the little Mexican had also become somewhat corrupted by her year at Herndon Hall.

Adelle had not yet found out fully how nice it

was to be rich, but she was learning fast. To be able to attract the attentions of agreeable young men like Carlos Merelda was another of the virtues of her magic lamp that she had never thought of before. Although she had no idea of taking Carlos's courtship seriously, she thought all the better of herself for this extra magnetism which her money gave her person. The kindliness of the Mereldas and their Mexican circle to the little American was due largely to her being a good friend of their Diane and also their guest, but it made Adelle grow in her own estimation. At present life seemed to consist in a gradual unfolding to her of the meaning of her new power, and a consequent enlargement of her egotism. That is unfortunately one of the commonest properties of wealth, —stimulating egotism, —and it takes much experience or an extraordinary nature to counteract this unhealthy stimulus. For the ordinary nature it is impossible to live day after day, year in and year out, under the powerful external stimulus of riches, without confounding the outer source of power with an innate virtue.

But with our Adelle, by the time her visit had come to an end, her new education had got merely to the point where she had the self-interest and assurance of the ordinary American girl of twelve. That Church Street experience had chastened her. But if her education was to continue at the present rate, she was likely to become selfish, egotistical, and purse-proud in a few years. As yet it had not made

her unpleasant, merely given her a little needed confidence in her own being.

She chose to make the long journey homewards by water from Vera Cruz to New York in charge of the captain of the vessel. For Señor Merelda, after the harassing activities of political warfare and its pecuniary drains, did not feel able to send his daughter back to Herndon Hall. So the two friends kissed and parted at Vera Cruz, Diane shedding all the tears. They expected to meet again before long, and of course agreed to write frequently. But life never again brought Adelle in contact with the warm-hearted little Latin, who had first held out to her the olive branch of human sympathy.

Adelle was met at the dock by "Rosy," who had with her "the two Pols" and Eveline Glynn at whose country home they were staying. "Rosy," as well as her schoolmates, was agreeably surprised by Adelle's appearance after her summer in Mexico. Nature was tardily asserting herself; Adelle was becoming a woman,—a small, delicate, pale little creature, whose rounding bust under her white dress gave her the dainty atmosphere of an early spring flower, fragile and frigid, but full of charm for some connoisseurs of human beauty. She had also acquired in Mexico a note of her own, which was perhaps due to the clothes she had bought in Mexico City on her way home, of filmy fabric and prominent colors; and her usually taciturn speech had taken on a languorous slowness in imitation of the Merel-

das' way of speaking English. In the drawling manner in which she said, — "Hello, Rosy," and nonchalantly accepted Miss Glynn's invitation for the intervening days before school opened, the new Adelle was revealed. The girls exchanged glances. And "Rosy" whispered Irene Paul, — "Our little Adelle is coming on." To which the California girl replied with a chuckle, — "Did n't I tell you she was a good old sport?"

Adelle, overhearing this, felt an almost vivid sense of pride.

But as yet hers was only a very little air, which was quickly wilted by the oppressive luxury of the Glynns' country-place — one of those large, ostentatious establishments that Americans are wont to start before they know how, and where consequently the elaborate domestic machinery creaks. There were men-servants of different nationalities, ladies' maids, and a houseful of guests coming and going as in a private hotel. Adelle shrank into the obscurest corner and her anemonelike charm, tentatively putting forth, was quite lost in the scramble. Beechwood was a much less genial home than the slipshod Mexican haçienda of the Mereldas and nobody paid any attention to the shy girl. Eveline Glynn, who expected in another year to be free from school, was too much occupied with her own flirtations to bother herself about her chance guest. Adelle, being left to her usual occupation of silent observation, managed to absorb a good deal at Beechwood in four

days, chiefly of the machinery of modern wealth. There were the elaborate meals, the drinking, the card-playing, the motors, the innumerable servants, and the sickening atmosphere of inane sentimentalism between the sexes. Everybody seemed to be having "an affair," and the talk was redolent of innuendo. Adelle had occasion to observe the potency of her lamp in this society. She worked it first upon the waiting-woman assigned to her, to whom she gave a large fee and who coached her devotedly in the ways of the house and supplied her with the gossip. It also brought her the annoying attentions of a middle-aged man, to whom her hostess had confided that the dumb little Clark girl was "awful rich."

At the end of the visit the girls went back to New York, under the chaperonage of "Rosy," to equip themselves for the school term, staying at a great new hotel, and here Adelle's corruption by her wealth was continued at an accelerated pace. The four girls flitted up and down the Avenue, buying and ordering what they would. There were definite limits to the purse of the Californians, but Adelle, perceiving the distinction to be had from free spending, ordered with a splendid indifference to price or amount. She won the admiration of her friends by the ease with which she gave her name and address. Adelle was in fact a little frightened by her own extravagance, but persisted with a child's curiosity to find out the limit of her magic lamp. She did not

reach it, however. Mr. Crane at her request had opened an account for her at the trust company's correspondent on upper Fifth Avenue, and apparently it was of a size that produced respect in the heart of the shopkeeper.

All these purchases, the clothes and the jewelry and the other rubbish that the girl bought, gave her no special pleasure, gratified no desires: she did not know what she could do with half the things at Herndon Hall. What gave her keen pleasure was the prestige of lavish spending. . . . After a debauch of theaters and dinners and shopping, the four girls were again taken in tow by the sophisticated "Rosy" and went up the river to Herndon Hall for Adelle's third year of boarding-school.

XV

ADELLE CLARK was thoroughly infected with the corruption of property by this time, and the coming years merely confirmed the ideas and the habits that had been started. She was now seventeen and an "old girl" at the Hall, privileged to torture less sophisticated girls when they presented themselves, if she had felt the desire to do so. She had not forgotten her Church Street existence: it had been much too definite to be easily forgotten. But she had been removed from it long enough to realize herself thoroughly in her new life and to know that it was not a dream. She would always remember Church Street, her aunt and uncle, and the laborious years of poverty with which it was identified; but gradually that part of her life was becoming the dream, while Herndon Hall and the Aladdin lamp of her fortune were the reality. By means of the latter she had won her position among her mates, and naturally she respected more and more the source of her power. Eveline Glynn "took her up" this year, and quite replaced the gentler Diane Merelda in her affections.

There was if anything less study this year than before. The older girls scouted the idea of studying anything. Most of them expected to leave school

forever the next spring and under the auspices of their mothers to enter the marriage game. A few intended as a preliminary to travel in Europe, "studying art or music." But the minds of all were much more occupied with love than anything else. Although the sex interest was still entirely dormant in Adelle, she learned a great deal about it from her schoolmates. Those good people who believe in a censorship of literature for the sake of protecting the innocent American girl should become enrolled at Herndon Hall. There they might be occasionally horrified, but they would come out wiser mortals. Adelle knew all about incredible scandals. Divorce, with the reasons for it, — especially the statutory one, — was freely discussed, and a certain base, pandering sheet of fashionable gossip was taken in at the Hall and eagerly devoured each week by the girls, who tried to guess at the thinly disguised persons therein pilloried. Thus Adelle became fully acquainted with the facts of sex in their abnormal as well as more normal aspects. That she got no special personal harm from this irregular education and from the example of "the two Pols" was due solely to her own unawakened temperament. Life had no gloss for her, and it had no poetic appeal. She supposed, when she considered the matter at all, that sometime as a woman she would be submitted to the coil of passion and sex, like all the others about whom her friends talked incessantly. They seemed to regard every man as a possible source of excitement to a

woman. But she resolved for her part to put off the interference of this fateful influence as long as possible. Sometime, of course, she must marry and have a child, — that was part of the fate of a girl with money of her own, — and then she should hope to marry a nice man who would not scold or ill-treat her or prefer some other woman — that was all.

"Dell is just a lump of ice!" Irene Paul often said, putting her own plump arms about Adelle's thin little body; and while Adelle tried to wriggle out of the embrace she teased her by assuming the man's aggressive rôle.

Thus the last months of her formal education slipped by. Adelle went through the easy routine of the Hall like the other girls, riding horseback a good deal during pleasant weather, taking a lively interest in dancing, upon which great stress was laid by Miss Thompson as an accomplishment and healthy exercise. She took a mild share in the escapades of her more lively friends, but for the most part her life was dull, though she did not feel it. The life of the rich, instead of being varied and full of deep experience, is actually in most cases exceedingly monotonous and narrowing. The common belief that wealth is an open sesame to a life of universal human experience is a stupid delusion, frequently used as a gloss to their souls by well-intentioned people. Apart from the strict class limitations imposed by the possession of large property, the ob-

ject of protected and luxurious people is generally merely pleasure. And pleasure is one of the narrowest fields of human experience conceivable, becoming quickly monotonous, which accounts for many extravagancies and abnormalities among the rich. Moreover, the sensual life of the well-fed and idle deadens imagination to such a degree that even their pleasures are imitative, not original: they do what their kind have found to be pleasurable without the incentive of initiative. If Adelle Clark had not been attached to Clark's Field and had been forced to remain in the Church Street rooming-house, by this time she would have been at work as a clerk or in some other business: in any case she must have touched realities closely and thus been immeasurably ahead of all the Herndon Hall girls.

Probably this doctrine would shock not only the managers of Herndon Hall, but also the officers of the trust company, who felt that they were giving their ward the best preparation for "a full life," such as the possession of a large property entitles mortals to expect. And though it may seem that the Washington Trust Company had been somewhat perfunctory in its care of its young ward, merely accepting the routine ideas of the day in regard to her education and preparation for life, they did nothing more nor worse in this than the majority of well-to-do parents who may be supposed to have every incentive of love and family pride in dealing with their young. The trust company in fact was merely an

impersonal and legal means of fulfilling the ideals of the average member of our society. Indeed, the trust company, in the person of its president and also of Mr. Ashly Crane, were just now giving some of their valuable time to consideration of the personal fate of their ward. She had been the subject of at least one conference between these officers. She was now on her way towards eighteen, and that was the age, as President West well knew, when properly conditioned young women usually left school, unless they were "queer" enough to seek college, and entered "society" for the unavowed but perfectly understood object of getting husbands for themselves. The trust company was puzzled as to how best to provide this necessary function for its ward. They felt that there existed no suitable machinery for taking this next step. They could order her clothes, or rather hire some one to buy them for her, order her a suitable "education" and pay for it, but they could not "introduce her to society" nor provide her with a good husband. And that was the situation which now confronted them.

They had received excellent reports of their ward latterly from Herndon Hall. Although Miss Thompson admitted that Miss Clark was not "intellectually brilliant," she had a "good mind," whatever that might mean, and had developed wonderfully at the Hall in bearing, deportment, manner—in all the essential matters of woman's education. Miss Thompson meant that Adelle spoke fairly cor-

rect English, drawled her *A*'s, wore her clothes as if she owned them, had sufficiently good table-manners to dine in public, and could hold her own in the conversation of girls of her kind. Miss Thompson recommended warmly that Adelle join Miss Stevens's "Travel Class," which was going abroad in June to tour the Continent and study the masterpieces of art upon the spot. The suggestion came as a relief to the trust company's officers: it put over their problem with Adelle for another year. But before accepting Miss Thompson's advice, Mr. Ashly Crane thought it wise to make another visit to Herndon Hall and talk the matter over with Adelle herself. He believed always in the "personal touch" method. And so once more he broke a journey westwards at Albany and rolled up the long drive in a motor-car.

Adelle enjoyed the impression which she was able to make upon the young banker this time. She had seen his approach in the car on her return from her ride, and had kept him waiting half an hour while she took a bath and dressed herself with elaborate care as she had often seen other girls do. Her teeth had at last been released from their harness and were nice little regular teeth. Her dull brown hair, thanks to constant skillful attention, had lately come to a healthy gloss. Her complexion was clear though pale, and her dress was a dream of revealing simplicity. Mr. Ashly Crane took in all these details at a glance,

and felt a glow of satisfaction beyond the purely male sense of appreciation: the trust company which he represented had done its duty by the little orphan, and what is more had got what it paid for. Their ward, as she stood before him with a faint smile on her thin lips, was a creditable creation of modern art. A thoroughly unpromising specimen of female clay had been moulded into something agreeable and almost pretty, with a faint, anemonelike bloom and fragrance. Mr. Ashly Crane, who was rather given to generalization about the might and majesty of American achievements, felt that the girl was a triumphant example of modern power, — "what we do when we try to do something," — like converting the waste land of Clark's Field into a city of brick and mortar, or making a hydrangea out of a field shrub.

"Well, Miss Clark," he began as the two seated themselves where they had sat the year before, "I need n't ask you how you are — your looks answer the question."

It was a banal remark, but Adelle recognized it for a compliment and smiled prettily. She said nothing. Silence was still the principal method of her social tactics.

"You are getting to be a young woman fast," the banker continued quite bluntly.

Adelle looked down and possibly blushed.

"Mr. West and I have been considering what to do" — he caught himself and tried again; — "that

is we have been in consultation with Miss Thompson about — your future."

Here Adelle looked the trust officer fully in the eye. On this point she seemed really interested this time. So Mr. Crane proceeded more easily to question her about the plan of joining Miss Stevens's "Travel Class." Adelle listened blankly while Mr. Crane wandered off into generalities about the advantages of travel and the study of "art" under the guidance of a mature woman. Suddenly she said quite positively, —

"I don't want to go with the 'Travel Class.'"

This was the first positive expression of any sort that the trust officer had ever heard from the ward. It was one of the very few that Adelle Clark had ever made in the eighteen years of her existence. Under Mr. Crane's inquiries it soon developed that Adelle did not like "Rosy" Stevens, — as nearly hated her as she was capable of hating any one, — nor had she any great fondness for the girls who were to compose this year's "Travel Class." They belonged to the snobbiest element in the school. . . . What, then, did she wish to do with herself — remain another year at Herndon Hall? Here again the ward amazed Mr. Crane, for she had ready a definite plan of her own — a small plan to be sure and imitative, but a plan.

She wished to go with her new friend Eveline Glynn and the California sisters to Paris. Eveline's parents, it seemed, were spending the next season in Europe, and after the manner of their kind they did not pro-

pose to be encumbered with a young daughter. So they had arranged to send her to Miss Catherine Comstock at Neuilly, and "the two Pols" had decided to do the same thing. It was not a school, — oh, no, not even a "finishing school," — but the home of an accomplished and brilliant American woman, who had long lived abroad and who undertook to chaperone in the French capital a very few desirable girls. The banker could not see how Miss Comstock's establishment in Neuilly differed essentially from the "Travel Class," except that it was more permanent, which shows how socially blunt Mr. Crane was. But after an interview with Miss Thompson he satisfied himself that the Glynns were "our very best people"; anything they thought right for their daughter must be fit for the Washington Trust Company's ward. So her guardian's assent to the plan was easily obtained, and the four friends rejoiced in their coming freedom. . . .

Adelle had no clear idea why she preferred Neuilly to the "Travel Class," except to be with Eveline Glynn and the two Paul girls. Paris and Rome were hazily mixed geographically in her ill-furnished mind, and culturally both were blank. Eveline had known girls who had stayed with Miss Comstock and they had given glowing accounts of their experiences. The Neuilly establishment, it appeared, was a place of perfect freedom, where the girls were chaperoned sufficiently to keep them out of serious mischief, but otherwise were allowed to please themselves in

their own way. And there was Paris, which, according to Eveline, who had informed herself from many sources, was the best place in the world for a good time. Friends were always coming there, to buy clothes and to make excursions. Adelle could have her own car, in which the four would take motor trips, and there was the opera, etc. And lastly Society — real Society; — for it seemed that this was one of Miss Comstock's strong points. She knew people, and had actually put a number of her girls in the way of marrying titled foreigners. The California girls knew of a compatriot who had thus acquired a Polish title. In short, there was nothing of the boarding-school in Miss Comstock's establishment, except the fees, which were enormous — five thousand dollars to start with.

Thus Adelle left Herndon Hall in the beautiful month of June, having received her last communion in the little ivy-covered stone chapel from the hands of the bishop himself, smiled upon by Miss Thompson and the other teachers, who had three years before pronounced her "a perfect little fright," and kissed by a few of her schoolmates. She felt that she was coming into her own, thanks to her magic lamp — that life ahead looked promising. Yet she had changed as little fundamentally during these three years as a human being well could. She had passed from the narrowest poverty of the Alton side street to the prodigal ease of Herndon Hall, from the en-

vironment of an inferior "rooming-house" to companionship with the rich daughters of "our very best people," — from an unformed child to the full physical estate of womanhood, — all within three short years; but she had accommodated herself to these great transitions with as little inward change as possible. Her soul was the soul of the Clarks, tricked out with good clothes and the manners and habits of the rich. Addie, it seemed, had at last arrived at her paradise in the person of her daughter, but it was a pale and inexpressive Addie, who made no large drafts upon paradise.

Adelle departed in the Glynn motor for the Glynn country-place, where she was to stay until the Glynns sailed for Europe. She was prettily dressed in écru-colored embroidered linen, with a broad straw hat and suède gloves and boots, according to the style of the day, and she was really happy and almost aware of it. Eveline was glum because her mother — a stern-looking matron who knew exactly what she wanted out of life and how to get it — had refused peremptorily to let her invite Bobby Trenow to accompany them. Bobby was Eveline's darling of the hour, as Adelle knew: Eveline had let him kiss her for the first time the previous evening, and she was "perfectly crazy" about him. To Adelle, Bobby was merely a smooth, downy boy like all the rest, who showed bare brown arms and white flannels in summer, and had as little to say for himsef as she had. She was amused at Nelly's fussed state over

the loss of Bobby; she could not understand Mother Glynn's objection to the harmless Bobby's occupying the vacant seat in the roomy car; — but then she did not understand many things in the intricate social world in which she found herself. She did not know that there is no one of their possessions that the rich learn more quickly to guard than their women. The aristocrats of all ages have jealously housed and protected their women from entangling sexual relations, while permitting the greatest license to their predatory males. The reasons are obvious enough to the mature intelligence, but difficult for the young to comprehend.

Adelle had not yet felt the need of a Bobby Trenow.

XVI

SOME years ago Prince Ponitowski had built in Neuilly, near the gate of the Bois, what contemporary novelists described as a "nest" for his mistress — a famous Parisian lady. It was a fascinating little villa with a demure brick and stone façade, a terrace, and a few shady trees in a tiny, high-walled garden. The prince died, and the lady having made other arrangements, the smart little villa came into the hands of Miss Catherine Comstock, who took a long lease of the premises and established there her family of "select" American girls. It might seem that the tradition of the Villa Ponitowski (as the place continued to be called) was hardly suitable for her purposes, but the robust common sense of our age rarely hesitates over such intangible considerations, and least of all the sophisticated Miss Comstock. At the Villa Ponitowski the young women enjoyed the healthful freedom of a suburb with the open fields of the Bois directly at their door, and yet were within easy reach of Paris, "with its galleries and many cultural opportunities" — according to the familiar phrasing of Miss Comstock's letters to inquiring parents. (She had no circulars.)

Miss Catherine Comstock herself was, in the last analysis, from Toledo, Ohio, of an excellent family

that had its roots in the soil of Muskingum. When her father died, there being no immediate prospect of marriage, she had taken to teaching in a girls' private school. It was not long before the routine of an American private school became irksome to her venturous spirit, and she conceived the idea of touring Europe with rich girls who had nothing else to do. From this developed the Neuilly scheme, which provided for the needs of that increasing number of Americans with daughters who for one reason or another do not live in America, and also for those American girls who could afford to experiment in the fine arts "carefully shielded from undesirable associates" — another favorite Comstock phrase. At first the art and education idea had been much to the fore, and Miss Comstock had fortified herself with one or two teachers and hired other assistants occasionally. But the life of Paris had proved so congenial and its "opportunities" so abundant that Miss Comstock had come to rely more and more upon the "privilege of European residence" and dispensed altogether with formal instruction.

She soon found that that was what the girls who came to her really wanted, even if their parents had vague thoughts of other things. In short, the Neuilly school was nothing else than a superior sort of select *pension* for eight or ten girls, with facilities for travel and more or less "society." Miss Comstock herself — affectionately known to "her girls" as "Pussy" Comstock — had been rather angular and

plain in the Toledo days, but under the congenial air of Paris and good dressmakers had developed into a smart specimen of the free-lance, middle-aged woman, with the sophistication of a thorough acquaintance with the world and much prudence garnered from a varied experience. She made an excellent impression upon the sort of parents she dealt with as a "woman who really knows life," and the girls always liked her, found her "a good chum." They called her "Pussy"! Miss Comstock kept with her a dumpy little American woman with glasses, who did what educational work was attempted, and the more tedious chaperonage. The Villa Ponitowski, in a word, was one of the modern adjustments between the ignorance and selfishness of parents and the selfishness and folly of children. The parents handed over their daughters for a season to Miss Comstock with a sigh of relief, believing that their girls would be perfectly "safe" in her care and might possibly improve themselves in language and knowledge of art and the world. And the daughters rejoiced, knowing from the reports of other girls that they would have "a perfectly bully time," freed from the annoying prejudices of parents, and might pick up an adventure or two of a sentimental nature. . . .

Into this final varnishing bath our heroine was plunged with her three friends, in the autumn of 1902, when she was eighteen years old. The girls arrived at the Villa from a motoring trip across Europe, during which they had scurried over the sur-

face of five countries and put up in thirty-eight different hotels as the labels on their bags triumphantly proclaimed. Miss Comstock received the party in her own little salon in the rear of the Villa, where, after the elder Glynns had withdrawn, liqueurs and cigarettes were served. Miss Comstock lit a cigarette, perched her well-shod feet on a stool, and listened with sympathetic amusement to the adventures of the trio as vivaciously related by Eveline Glynn. The California sisters, it developed, had the cigarette habit, too, and Eveline tried one of "Pussy's" special kind. When the girls went to their rooms, to which they were conducted by Miss Comstock with an arm around the waist of Adelle and another about Irene Paul, the girls agreed that "Pussy" was "all right" and congratulated themselves upon the perspicacity of their choice.

At Herndon Hall there had been at least the pretense of discipline and study, but all such childish notions were laughed at in the Villa Ponitowski. Eveline Glynn thought she had a voice and a teacher was engaged for her. Irene Paul devoted herself to the art of whistling, while her sister "went in for posters." Another girl was supposed to be studying painting and resorted a few afternoons each week to a studio, well chaperoned. Miss Comstock promised to find something for Adelle to do in an art way. But there was nothing pedantic or professional about the Villa Ponitowski. Miss Comstock prided herself upon her outlook. She knew that her girls would

marry in all likelihood, and she endeavored to give them something of the horizon of broad boulevards and watering-places as a preparation. All the girls had their own maids, who brought them the morning cup of coffee whenever they rang — usually not before noon. The European day, Adelle learned, began about one o'clock with a variety of expeditions and errands, and frequently ended well after midnight at opera or play, or dancing party at the home of some American resident to whom Miss Comstock introduced her charges. This was during the season. Then there were, of course, expeditions to Rome and Vienna and Madrid, tours of cathedral towns, inspection of watering-places, etc.

Behold, thus, the sole descendant of the hard-grubbing, bucolic Clarks waking from her final nap at eleven in the morning, imbibing her coffee from a delicate china cup, and nibbling at her *brioche*, while her maid opened the shutters, started a fire in the grate, and laid out her dresses, chattering all the time in charming French about delectable nothings. Addie Clark, surely, would have felt that she had not lived in vain if she could have beheld her only child at this time, and overheard the serious debate as to which "*robe*" Mademoiselle Adelle would adorn herself with for the afternoon, and have seen her, finally equipped, descending to the salon to join Miss Comstock, who was usually engaged with her correspondence at this hour.

Adelle, it is perhaps needless to say, had quickly

perceived the enlarged opportunity for the use of her magic lamp. She at once ordered a very comfortable limousine, which was driven by an experienced chauffeur, and thus transported herself, Miss Comstock, and any of the girls she chose to invite to the exhibition at the Georges Petit Gallery, thence to a concert, or perhaps merely to tea at the new hotel in the Champs Élysées. If any reader has perhaps considered Adelle backward or stupid, he must quickly revise that opinion at this point. For it was truly extraordinary the rapidity with which the pale, passive young heiress caught the pace of Paris. The note of the world about her was the spending note, and the drafts she made through her French bankers upon the Washington Trust Company caused a certain uneasiness even among those sophisticated officials, used to the expenditures of the rich.

Of course, Miss Comstock introduced her charges to the best dressmakers and dispensers of lingerie and millinery (for which service she obtained free of charge all her own clothes). Adelle soon found her own way into the shops of the Rue de la Paix and developed a genuine passion — the first one of her life — for precious stones. It may be remembered that when she was taken as a little girl for the first time into the new home of the trust company, she had been much impressed by the gorgeousness of colored marble and glass there profusely used. For a long time the great banking-room with its dim violet light had remained in her memory as a source

of sensuous delight, and as her opportunities had increased she had turned instinctively to things of color and warmth, especially in stones and fabrics. In those public and private exhibitions to which she was constantly conducted as part of her education in art she hung over the cases that contained specimens of new designs in metal and stone. Miss Comstock, perceiving her interest in these toys, encouraged Adelle to try her own hand at the manufacture of jewelry, and engaged a needy woman worker to give her the necessary lessons in the lapidary art. Adelle had acquired considerable sloth from her desultory way of living; nevertheless, when the chance was forced into her hands, she took to the new work with ardor and produced some bungling imitations of the new art, which were much admired at the Villa Ponitowski. Eveline, not to be outdone, took up bookbinding, though she scarcely knew the inside of one book from another. The art of tooling leather was then cultivated by women of fashion in New York: it gave them something to talk about and a chance to play in a studio.

I should like to record that Adelle developed a latent talent for making beautiful things in the art she had inadvertently chosen to practice. But that would be straining the truth. It requires imagination to produce original and pleasing objects in small jewelry, and of imagination Adelle had not betrayed a spark. Moreover, it takes patience, application, and a skillful hand to become a good craftsman in

any art, and these virtues had no encouragement in the life that Adelle had led since leaving the Church Street house. So in spite of the admiration aroused by her *bijoux* when she gave them to the inmates of the Villa, it must be admitted that they were more like the efforts of a school child who has prepared its handiwork for presents to admiring relatives than anything else. But at least it was a real interest, and it raised Adelle in her own estimation. Some of the happiest days she had known were spent in the studio of Miss Cornelia Baxter, on the Rue de l'Université. She would have spent more time there if her other engagements or distractions had not constantly interrupted her pursuit of art. Her position of practical independence and unlimited means gave her a prestige in "Pussy" Comstock's household that exhausted most of her time and energy. Her car and herself were in constant demand. And in the Easter holidays "the family" went to Rome for a month, and to London at the opening of the season there in June. So not much time was left for the pursuit of art.

Yet this effort to make jewelry on Adelle's part is important, as the first sign of promise of individuality. It betrayed the possibility of a taste. She loved color, richness of substance, and Europe was satisfying this instinct. Pale and colorless herself, mentally perhaps anæmic or at least lethargic, she discovered in herself a passion for color and richness. Certain formless dreams about life began to haunt

her mind — vague desires of warmth and color and emotion. Thus Paris was developing the latent possibilities of sensuousness in this pale offshoot of Puritanism.

XVII

THE winter had passed agreeably and rapidly for Adelle. But London did not please her because Miss Comstock insisted upon a rather rigorous course of museums and churches and show places, which always fatigued and bored Adelle. She was also taken to garden parties where she was expected to talk, and that was the last thing Adelle liked doing. Whatever expressive reaction to life she had could never be put into words for the casual comer. She would stand helpless before the most persistent man, seeking a means of escape, and as men are rarely persistent or patient with a dumb girl she stood alone much of the time in spite of her reputation for wealth, which Miss Comstock carefully disseminated to prepare the way for her.

One morning while her maid was brushing her hair, an operation that Adelle particularly liked and over which she would dawdle for hours, a card was brought to her, which bore the name — "Mr. Ashly Crane" — and underneath this simple and sufficient explanation — "The Washington Trust Company." Adelle had almost forgotten Mr. Crane's existence. He had become more a signature than a a person to her. Nevertheless, the memory of her girlish triumph the last time they had met caused

her to hasten her toilet and put in an appearance in the private salon she had at the hotel in something less than half an hour. There she found the young banker very spruce in his frock coat and silk hat, which he had furnished himself with in America and assumed the day of his arrival on English soil. He was taking a vacation, he promptly explained to Adelle, in which, of course, he should do several pieces of important business. But he gave the girl to understand that she was not on this business list: he had looked her up purely as a pleasure. In fact, the trust people had become somewhat uneasy over Miss Clark's frequent drafts, which altogether exceeded the liberal sum that President West felt was suitable for a young woman to spend, though well within her present income, and suggested that Mr. Crane should find out what she was doing and if she were likely to get into mischief. The young banker had had it in mind to see Adelle in any case — she had left a sufficiently distinct impression with him for that. There may have revived in his subconsciousness that earlier dream of capturing for himself the constantly expanding Clark estate, although as yet nothing had defined itself positively in his active mind.

When at last the girl entered the little hotel salon where he had been cooling his heels for the half-hour, he had a distinct quickening of this latent purpose. Adelle Clark was not at this period, if she ever was, what is usually called a pretty girl. She

had grown a little, and now gave the impression of being really tall, which was largely an effect of her skillful dressmaker. Pale and slender and graceful, exquisitely draped in a gown subtly made for her, with a profusion of barbaric jewelry which from this time on she always affected, Adelle was what is commonly called striking. She had the enviable quality of attracting attention to herself, even on the jaded streets of Paris, as suggesting something pleasurably different from the stream of passers-by. The American man of affairs did not stop to analyze all this. He was merely conscious that here was a woman whom no man need be ashamed of, even if he married her for other reasons than her beauty. And he set himself at once, not to catechize the bank's ward about her expenditures, but to interest the girl in himself. They went to the Savoy for luncheon, and the trust officer noted pleasurably the attention they received as they made their way through the crowded breakfast-room. And in spite of Adelle's monosyllabic habit of conversation, they got on very well over their food, about which Adelle had well-formulated ideas. He suggested taking a cab and attending the cricket match, and so after luncheon they gayly set forth on the long ride to Hurlingham in the stream of motors and cabs bound for the match.

Adelle smiled shyly at Mr. Crane's heavy sarcasm upon British ways, and replied briefly to his questions about her winter in Paris. The situation

was a novel one to her, and she enjoyed it. The one thing her money had thus far not done for her was to bring her men — she had, indeed, done nothing herself to attract them. But now for five hours she had the constant attention of a good-looking, well-dressed, mature man. To be sure Mr. Ashly Crane was much older than she. He gave her the curious sensation of being in some way a relative. Was the Washington Trust Company not the nearest thing to a relative that she had? And Mr. Ashly Crane was the personal symbol to her of the trust company — its voice and lungs and clothes. So she felt a faint emotion over the incident. As they were returning from the cricket field in the English twilight, with the scurry of moving vehicles all about them, Mr. Crane ventured on more personal topics than he had hitherto broached. He felt that by this time they must be quite good friends. So he began, —

Did she like living in Europe?

Yes, she found it very pleasant and Miss Comstock was the nicest teacher she had ever had — really not like a teacher at all; and she liked Miss Baxter and the metal-work. (This was a long and complicated statement for Adelle.)

She must show him some of her work. Was that chain (taking it familiarly in his hands to look at it) her own handiwork?

Oh, no; that was a Lalique . . . the chief artist in this *genre* in Paris. (The banker mentally accounted for some of the recent drafts.) Did n't he

think it pretty? — such an unusual arrangement of the stones!

He should not call it exactly pretty — odd rather; — but it was very becoming to her. . . . He should like to see some of her own work, etc.

Oh, she should never dare to show him anything she had done. She was nothing but a beginner, etc., etc.

Later on, as they entered the dark precincts of the city, another step nearer the personal was taken.

She would want to spend another year in Europe probably?

Oh, yes, they had the loveliest plans. Miss Comstock was going to take her and Eveline Glynn on a visit to some friends who had an estate in Poland, in the mountains, a real castle, etc. (Mental note by the banker — "Must look up this Comstock woman — seems to have a good deal of influence upon the girl.") And then they were all going to Italy again in the spring and perhaps Greece, though everybody said that was too hard on account of the poor hotels. And she did want to go up the Nile and see the Sphynx and all the rest of it, etc., etc. (Pause).

Had she any idea what she would like to do afterwards, where she wanted to live?

When?

Why, after she had finished her education.

Oh, she wanted to go on making pretty things — she should have a studio of her own, of course, like Miss Baxter.

"Where?"

"Why in Paris, — perhaps New York," Adelle replied vaguely, indifferently.

That gave Mr. Crane an opportunity for an improving homily on the folly of expatriation, the beauty of living in one's own country among one's own people, and so forth, which brought them to the door of Adelle's hotel. Mr. Crane came in and met Miss Comstock and the girls she had with her. Then he disappeared and returned later in full dress and took the party to the Carlton for dinner and then to a light opera. The girls were entranced with Mr. Crane, especially the two Californians, and redoubled their envy of the fortunate Adelle in having this handsome substitute for a parent. They called him her "beau," by which designation Mr. Ashly Crane was henceforth known among Pussy Comstock's girls during their sojourn in London.

He had not made quite the same favorable impression upon Miss Comstock, who was acquainted with all sorts and conditions of men. The two recognized immediately an antagonism of interests, and spent this first evening of their acquaintance in reconnoitering each other's position with Adelle. "Little bounder," Miss Comstock pronounced with the quick perception of a woman; "he's after the girl's money." While the man said to himself, with the more ponderous indirectness of the male, — "That woman is not quite the influence that an unformed girl should have about her. She's working the

girl, too, for motors and things." And yet both smiled and joked companionably across the shoulders of the unconscious Adelle.

As the trust officer returned to his hotel in his hansom, he jingled a few stray coins in his pocket, the remains of twenty pounds in gold that the day had cost him. A long education in finance, however, had taught him to be indifferent to these petty matters of preliminary expense. Nevertheless, before retiring he entered up the sum to the Clark estate expense account. Poor Adelle, dreaming of her "beau"! Her first real spree with a man was charged to her own purse.

XVIII

THERE were many similar items added to the account during the next fortnight. It seemed that Mr. Ashly Crane had nothing better to do with his European vacation than to give Miss Clark and her companions a good time, or, as he intimated to Miss Comstock, "to get into closer touch with the company's ward." Naturally he was a godsend to the Comstock girls, for he could take them to places where without a man they could not go. There was a mild orgy of motoring, dining, and theater. Pussy Comstock, experienced campaigner that she was, made no objection to this junketing. A fixed principle with her was to let any man spend his money as freely as he was inclined to. Yet she skillfully so contrived that the young banker had few opportunities of solitary communion with his ward. At first Mr. Crane did not understand why the Glynn girl or one of the Paul sisters was always in the way, and then he comprehended the artful maneuver of the woman and resented it. One afternoon, when he had taken the party up the river, he announced bluntly after tea that he and Adelle were going out in a punt together. Leaving Miss Comstock and the three other girls to amuse themselves as they could, he stoutly pulled forth from the landing and around a

bend in the river. Thereafter his efforts relaxed, and he had Adelle to himself for two long hours. And Adelle, reclining on the gaudy cushions under an enormous pink sunshade, was not unenticing. Her air of indolent taciturnity was almost provoking. Mr. Ashly Crane quite persuaded himself that he was really in love with the young heiress.

Oddly enough he chose this opportunity to discuss with her her business affairs, which was the excuse he had tossed Miss Comstock for abstracting the ward from the rest of the party. He found that she knew almost nothing about the source of her fortune — that lean stretch of sandy acres known as Clark's Field. He related to her the outline of the story of the Field as it has been told in these pages. Adelle listened with a peculiarly blank expression on her pale face. She was in fact trying hard to recall certain distant images of her early life — memories that were neither pleasant nor painful, but very odd to her, so strange that she could not realize herself as having once been the little drudge in the rooming-house on Church Street, with the manager of the livery-stable as the star roomer. While the banker was relating the steps by which she had become an heiress, she was seeing the face of the liveryman and that of the probate judge, who had first taken an active part in her destiny and turned it into its present smooth course. . . .

"So," Mr. Crane was saying, "the bank was finally able to make an arrangement by which the long

deadlock was broken and Clark's Field could be sold — put on the market in small lots, you know. Owing to a very fortunate provision, you are the beneficiary of one half of the sales made by the Field Associates, as the corporation is called — whenever they dispose of any of it they pay us for you half the money!"

(He neglected to state that this "fortunate provision" was due solely to the shrewdness and probity of Judge Orcutt; that if he and the trust company's president had had their way she would have been obliged to content herself with a much more modest income than she now enjoyed. But doubtless Mr. Crane felt that was irrelevant.)

"So you see, little girl," he concluded, in a burst of unguarded enthusiasm, "we are piling up money for you while you are playing over here."

As something seemed to be expected of her, Adelle remarked lamely, —

"That is very nice."

"Yes," Mr. Crane continued with satisfaction. "You can congratulate yourself on having such good care of your property as we give it. . . . And let me tell you it did n't look promising at first. There were no end of legal snarls that had to be straightened out — in fact, if I had n't urged it strongly on the old man I doubt if they would have taken hold of the thing at all!"

"Oh," Adelle responded idly, "what was the trouble?"

"Why, those other heirs — that Edward S. Clark and his children. If *they* had turned up we should have been in a pretty mess."

"Oh!"

"It would have upset everything."

"Why?"

He had just explained all this, but thinking that women never understood business matters until everything had been explained several times, and anxious to impress the girl with the benefits that she had derived from the guardian which the law had given her, also indirectly from himself, he patiently went all over the point again.

"Why, your great-grandfather Clark had two sons, and when he died he left a will in which he gave both of his sons an undivided half interest in this land. But the elder son had disappeared — they could never find him."

"Edward," observed the girl, remembering her uncle's frequent curses at the obstinate Edward. "Yes, I know. He went to Chicago and got lost."

"Afterward he went to St. Louis, but beyond that no trace of him or his family can be found."

"I suppose some day he will turn up when he hears that there's some money," Adelle remarked simply.

The banker scowled.

"Well, I hope not! . . . Edward is n't likely to now: he must be a young thing of eighty-seven by this time."

"Well, his children, then."

"They would have difficulty in proving their claim. You see there's been a judicial sale, ordered by the court, and every precaution taken. . . . No, there's no possibility of trouble in that quarter."

"Then they won't get their money?" Adelle remarked, thinking how disappointed these hypothetical descendants of Edward Clark must be.

"No," agreed the trust officer with a laugh. "They're too late for dinner."

Adelle, who did not understand the mental jump of a figure of speech, stared at him blankly.

"It's too bad," she observed placidly at last.

"Yes, it is decidedly too bad for them," the banker repeated ironically. "But it's life."

After this profound reflection they paddled idly for a few moments, and then the trust officer resumed, nearer to his theme.

"So you see, Miss Clark, you're likely to be a pretty rich woman when you come of age. The old leases on the estate are running out, and as fast as they can the managers of the Clark's Field Associates sell at a good price or make a long lease at a high figure and everything helps to swell the estate, which we are investing safely for you in good stocks and bonds that are sure to increase in value before you will want to sell them."

"How much money is there?" Adelle demanded unexpectedly. This was her opportunity to discover the size of her magic lamp.

"I could n't say offhand," the banker replied cautiously. "But enough to keep you from want, if you don't spend too much making jewelry." He added facetiously, — "You don't feel cramped for money, do you?"

"No-o," the girl admitted dubiously. "But you can't always tell what you may want."

"If you don't want much more than you do at present, you're safe," Mr. Crane stated guardedly. "That is, if nothing goes wrong — a panic, and that sort of thing."

After a pause he said, —

"But you should have some one look after your property, invest it for you — a woman can't do that very well."

"The bank does it, don't it?"

"I mean after you are of age and have control of your own property."

"Oh," the girl murmured vaguely, running her hand through the ripples of river water. "That's a good ways off! . . . I suppose I shall be married by that time, and *he* will look after it for me."

She said this in a thoroughly matter-of-fact voice, but the banker almost jumped from his seat at the words.

"You are n't thinking of getting married yet!" he exclaimed hastily.

"I suppose I shall some day," she replied.

"Of course you'll marry sometime," he said with relief; and ran on glibly, — "That is the natural

thing. Every girl should get married early. But you must take good care, my dear girl, not to make a mistake. You might be very unhappy, you know. He might not treat you right." And with a sense of climax he exclaimed, — "He might lose all your money — ruin you!"

"Yes, he might," Adelle agreed with composure. "They do that sometimes."

She looked at him from her open gray eyes undisturbed by the prospect, as if, womanlike, she was aware of this unpleasant fate in danger of which she must always be. Mr. Ashly Crane knew that this was the point when his love-making should begin, but suddenly he felt that Adelle Clark was a very difficult person to make love to.

"Perhaps you've been thinking of the man?" he opened clumsily.

She shook her head thoughtfully.

"No, I have n't."

"But you could love some one?"

"I suppose so," she answered in such a matter-of-fact tone that for the moment he was baffled. The present situation, he decided, was unfavorable for love-making, and searched desperately within for his next words.

"I wonder what they look like," Adelle mused aloud.

"Who look like — husbands?"

"No, Edward's children — the other heirs," she explained.

"Perhaps there are n't any," he snapped.

And under his breath Mr. Ashly Crane consigned Edward S. Clark and all his offspring to perdition.

XIX

MR. CRANE was a persistent person. Otherwise he would hardly have arrived where he had in the Washington Trust Company. Having failed to broach the great subject in the afternoon, he immediately made another opportunity for himself by hustling Adelle, ahead of the others, into his own cab for the return drive to the city, and then jumping in after her and giving the driver the order to leave. It was very ill-bred and he knew it, but he was determined not to bother about Miss Comstock any longer. His vacation was very nearly at an end, and this would be his last chance for another year if the ward was to remain in Europe as was her present determination. He consoled himself with the thought that the others had Adelle's car at their disposal, and gave the order to take a roundabout road back to London. The driver needed but the suggestion to plunge them into a maze of forgotten country roads where there were no lights and no impeding traffic. . . .

There are in general three ways in which to make love to a woman, young or old: the deliberate, the impulsive, and the inevitable. Of the third there is no occasion to speak here, as neither Ashly Crane nor Adelle understood it. Of the remaining two the

deliberate method of cautious, persistent siege was more to the taste and the temperament of the banker, but he was strictly limited in time. The Kaiser Nonsuch, on which his passage was reserved, sailed in three days from Southampton, and he must win within that brief period or put the matter over for a whole year. And he judged that Adelle, under her present environment with such an expert manager as Miss Catherine Comstock, would not be left hanging on the bough within his reach for long. A year's delay would almost surely be fatal, and it was uncertain whether he could get away before the next summer from his important responsibilities at the Washington Trust Company. So haste must be the word.

That he should reason thus about a delicate matter of sentiment betrays not merely the man's coarse grain, but the inferiority of the commercial experience in making an accomplished lover. He had been trained in the "new school" of rapid finance to complete large transactions on the moment, never letting small uncertainties or delays interfere with his purposes. It was really not essential to the working of the financial system — even for the salvation of the Washington Trust Company — that Mr. Ashly Crane should turn up at his desk on the morning of the twenty-sixth instanter. It might just as well have been the thirty-first or even the middle of the next month — or, if he should have the good luck to gain the heart and hand of the heiress, never

at all! But Mr. Ashly Crane was neither of the temperament nor of the age to play the sentimental game thus desperately. He was altogether too much an American to let his love-making interfere with his business schedule. (Besides, there was not another swift steamer sailing for New York for three weeks.)

So he sighed, and when the cab shot into the umbrageous dimness of old trees he took the girl's hand in his. She made no attempt to withdraw her hand. Probably Adelle was more frightened by this first experience in the eternal situation than the man was, and that is saying a good deal. She took refuge in her usual defense against life and its many perplexities, which was silence, permitting the banker to press her captive hand for several moments while the cab tossed on the uneven road and Crane was summoning his nerve for the next step. Her heart beat a little faster, and she wondered what was going to happen.

That was the man's attempt to encircle her waist with his free arm. In this maneuver Adelle did not assist him: instead, she pushed herself back against the cushion so firmly that it made it a difficult engineering feat to obtain possession of her figure. By this time his face was close to hers, and he was stammering incoherently such words as — "Adelle" . . . "Dearest" . . . "Love" . . . etc. But we will spare the reader Mr. Ashly Crane's crude imitation of ardor. All love-making, even the most sincere and eloquent, is verbally disappointingly alike

and rather tame. The human animal, ingenious as he is in many ways, is nevertheless almost as limited as the ape when it comes to the articulation of the deeper emotions. That is why delicacy and the habit of *nuances* give the experienced wooer such an immense advantage, even with a raw girl like Adelle, over the mere clumsy male. Love, like the drama, being so rigidly limited in technique, is no field for the bungler! And Mr. Ashly Crane was far from being an artist in anything.

By this time Adelle had become aware that she was being made love to. It filled her with a variety of emotions not clearly defined. First of all, there was something of the woman's natural complacency in her first capture, more vivid than when the other girls had dubbed Mr. Crane her "beau." This was a *bona fide* illustration of what all the girls talked about most of the time and the novels were full of from cover to cover — love-making! And next was a feeling akin to repugnance. Mr. Crane was not aged — barely forty-two — and he was good-looking enough and quite the man. But to Adelle he had always been, if not exactly a parent, at least an older brother or uncle, — in some category of relationship other than that of young love. That he should thus hastily be professing ardent sentiments towards her seemed a trifle improper. Beneath these superficial feelings there were, of course, some deeper ones; — for instance, a slight sense of humor in his clumsy management and a feeling of gratification that at

last the unknown had arrived. And a something else not wholly unpleasant in her own small person. . . .

Crane was mumbling something about his loneliness and her unprotected condition. Adelle was not aware that she was to be pitied because of lack of protection, but she liked to be the object of sympathy. Gradually she relaxed, and permitted him to insert his arm between her and the cushion, which he seemed so ridiculously anxious to do. At once he drew her slight form towards him. He was saying, —

"Dearest! Can you — will you —"

And she demanded point-blank, —

"What?"

"Love me!" the man breathed very close to her.

"I don't know," she replied, struggling to regain her refuge in the corner from which his embrace had dragged her.

And just here Ashly Crane committed an irretrievable blunder, due to those imperfections of nature and technique which have been described before. As the cab lurched, throwing the girl nearer him, he grasped her very firmly and kissed her. The Kaiser Nonsuch sailed on the Thursday, and it was now Monday. . . .

As his mustached lips sought her small mouth and met the cold, hard little lips, he knew that he had taken a fearful risk. Adelle did not scream. She did not struggle very much. She took the kiss passively, as if she had some curiosity to know what a man's

kiss was like. After he had given it with sufficient ardor and was ready to relax his passionate embrace, she drew back calmly into her corner and looked at him very coolly out of her gray eyes. After the flurry of the struggle, with her brown hair slightly awry, her hat tipped back, and her lips still half open as they had been forced by his kiss, she was almost pretty. But those gray eyes looked at him as no girl ought to look after her lover's first kiss, and let us hope as few girls do look. Mr. Ashly Crane read there that he had lost his chance with the heiress. There was just enough of spirit even in his common clay to divine this. If only he had not been so hasty! — not tried to "put the thing through" before sailing, and do it in the manner of the "whirlwind campaign." . . .

For a moment or two there was silence within the cab while the car rocked on in its mad race for London. They were well within the outskirts of the city now, and the banker knew that there would not be time to work up to another crisis. He must defer the recovery until the morrow, if he could summon courage to go on with it at all. But the girl still stared at him out of her wide-open eyes, as if she were saying in her small head — "So that's what a man's kiss is like." He muttered uncomfortably a lot of nonsense about forgetting himself, and her forgiving him, — ignorant that in such a grave matter forgiveness is always out of the question: either it is not needed, or it cannot possibly be given. Adelle said

nothing, merely looked at him until he was driven to turn his head away and gaze out of the swiftly moving cab at the lighted streets to escape the wonder and the surprise and the contempt in those gray eyes. As they turned into Piccadilly, he remarked brusquely, — "I shall come to-morrow morning — and get your answer!" That was to "save his face," as we say, for her answer was written in those eyes. Again he took her little ungloved hand and tried to bear it to his lips. But this time Adelle gently, firmly extracted it from his grasp and placed it behind her back with its mate, safely out of reach, still looking at him gravely.

Crane helped her out of the cab, and turned to pay the driver, who was beaming with expectation of an extra fee for his participation in this adventure. When he had settled the fare, Adelle had disappeared within the hotel. Judging that it might be unwise to follow her, Mr. Ashly Crane walked off to his hotel, scowling along the way, very little pleased with himself. He was really more mortified at discovering how poor an artist in the business he was than by his ill success itself.

"Nothing but a meek, pale-faced, little schoolgirl, too!" he was saying to himself. And aloud, — "Oh, damn the women."

XX

ADELLE went straight to her own rooms, but before she could close the door Miss Comstock was on her heels. Having taken the direct route to London in Adelle's swift car, she had had ample time to change her gown, and now looked specially groomed and ready for the encounter, with keen, knowing green eyes. Closing the door carefully, Miss Comstock turned, looked Adelle over from her hat, which was still slightly tipped, to her ungloved hands.

"Well?" she remarked with perceptible irony.

Adelle did not mean to tell anything. She wanted to keep this, her first affair, to herself, no matter what she might consider it to be, and she was not yet sure what she should think of it finally. So she had tried her best to dodge her companions until she had had time to simulate her usual appearance. But she had been caught by "Pussy" red-handed. To the mentor's repeated "Well?" she said nothing, a foolish little smile starting without her will around the corners of her mouth.

"So he kissed you?" Miss Comstock continued; and as Adelle's eyes dropped guiltily, she remarked contemptuously, — "The cad!"

Adelle was only vaguely acquainted with the mean-

ing of this hateful word, but if she had realized its full significance she would not have cared, though she had no desire to defend Mr. Ashly Crane. She was silent, while Miss Comstock tore a few more shreds from Adelle's poor little "affair."

"I knew that was what he was after from the first, my dear. It was written all over him! . . . A pretty kind of an officer for a trust company to have! If the directors of the Washington Trust Company knew of this there would be trouble for Mr. Ashly Crane! . . . A ward, too—"

"He's always been nice to me," Adelle protested lamely, feeling that in her invective Pussy was reflecting upon her guardians.

"Of course! . . . I have no doubt he made up his mind to get you, as soon as he knew how rich you would be."

This was too raw even for Adelle. The girl drew herself up haughtily, and Miss Comstock adroitly covered up her mistake.

"You know, my dear, that is one of the dangers any woman with money is exposed to. Luckily this is your first experience with the mere fortune-hunter, but you will find that there are many men in the world just like this Mr. Ashly Crane, who are incapable of a genuine passion for any woman, and are always looking for a rich wife. No girl wants to think that a man is making love to her because she has money — especially when she has other attractions. . . . To think that this man, who ought to

have shielded you from everything, should be the one to humiliate you so!"

She proceeded with an admirable mingling of flattery and friendliness to put Adelle on her guard against the male sex.

"At least," she concluded, "a man ought to have something to offer a rich girl, — a name or position. What has that little cad to give you? Social position? A title? Nothing! If a woman must marry, she should get something in the bargain."

She succeeded in thoroughly humiliating Adelle for what she had secretly been a little proud of, her first "affair," and easily killed with her contempt any possibility of the girl's yielding to the banker's persistency.

"He said he was coming to see me to-morrow," Adelle finally pouted almost tearfully.

"He will see *me* to-morrow instead," Miss Comstock said promptly; "and I don't think he will trouble you again."

The encounter on the following morning between the trust officer and Pussy Comstock is not a part of this story. Enough to say that Mr. Crane got his steamer at Southampton and was happily so seasick all the way across that he could not worry over his failure in the gentle art of love-making. He told his friends that he had spent a dull vacation in England, and spoke disparagingly of British institutions and of Europe for Americans generally. When President West inquired about the ward, he spoke very guard-

edly of Adelle and of Miss Catherine Comstock. He intimated that Miss Clark had developed into an uninteresting and somewhat headstrong young woman, and implied that he had doubts about the influence which her present mentor had upon her character. However, the trust company would soon be absolved from all responsibility for its ward, and it might be as well to let matters rest as they were for the present, if the drafts from Paris did not become too outrageous, which, of course, was exactly what Mr. West and the other officers wished to do — nothing.

Hereafter Mr. Ashly Crane must honor any draft that Adelle might make, no matter how "outrageous" it was. (The drafts came fluttering across the ocean on every steamer for ever-increasing amounts until the young heiress was living at the rate of nearly forty thousand dollars a year.) The banker might wonder how a young girl, still nominally in school, could get away with so much money. He might fear that her extravagance would become a habit and carry her even beyond the limits of her large means. But he could not say a word. Miss Comstock, indeed, had put him in a sorry situation for a full-grown banker. The more he thought about the unfortunate episode of his love-making, the more he cursed himself. President West, whose special protégé the young banker had always been, held very strict notions about honor and the relation of the officers of the company to its clients. In Adelle's

case — that of a minor entrusted to them by the probate court — the president would feel doubly incensed if he suspected that any officer had attempted to take advantage of her unprotected and inexperienced youth. So Mr. Ashly Crane walked softly these days and promptly honored Adelle's drafts.

it, buying nothings of all sorts to give away or throw away. It seemed as if all the penurious years of the Clarks were now being revenged in one long prodigal draft by this last representative of their line. The magic lamp responded admirably each time Adelle rubbed it by simply writing her name upon a slip of paper at the banker's. She had a child's curiosity to find out the limits of its marvelous power, and daringly increased her demands upon it. Possibly if Miss Comstock's designs had carried, she might have discovered this limit within a few years: but her fate was shaping otherwise.

Meantime her little "affair" with the banker excited the other girls in the family, who felt that the rich young heiress must encounter many wonderful adventures in love. Adelle was initiated in the great theme, and for the first time began to take an interest in men. Perhaps Mr. Ashly Crane's crude love-making had broken down certain inhibitions in the girl's passive nature, had overcome an instinctive repugnance to sex encounters. The path of the next wooer would doubtless be easier. But that lucky man did not put in an appearance. Miss Comstock jealously guarded the approaches to her treasure with greater discretion than ever before. She made no effort to prepare for her an alliance with an impecunious scion of the minor Continental nobility such as she arranged later for Sadie Paul. She said that she could think of no one good enough for her dear Adelle, and anyway the girl was alto-

gether too young to think of marrying — another year would be ample time. So Adelle was confined to the younger brothers and friends of her companions, who turned up in Paris at different times, and upon these she tried timidly her powers of charm with no great success. Apparently she was content to remain without "beaux." Luxury had made her indolent, and her days were full of petty occupations that distract the spirit. Yet at times she felt a vague emptiness in her life which she soon found means of filling in an unsuspected manner.

Adelle's interest in the art of jewelry had not ceased, but she was away from Paris this second year so much that her work in Miss Baxter's studio had been sadly interrupted. After her return from the Nile in March, however, she developed anew her passion for making pins and chains and rings, and spent long afternoons in the studio on the Rue de l'Université. Miss Comstock thought nothing of these absences; indeed, was relieved to have Adelle so harmlessly and elegantly employed. It is true that Adelle was working in the studio, but she was working under a new tutelage. A fellow-townsman of Miss Baxter's had turned up in Paris that autumn and frequented her studio as the only place where he could be sure of a welcome, warmth, and an occasional cup of tea. This young Californian, Archie Davis by name, had found his way to Paris as the traditional home of the arts, and expected to make himself famous as a painter. A graduate of the State

University, he had been engaged by his father in vine culture on the sunny slopes of Santa Rosa, but the life of a California wine-grower had not appealed to him. From the slopes of Santa Rosa he soon drifted to San Francisco, and there conceived of himself as a painter. He was a large, vigorous, rather common young Californian, with reddish hair and a slightly freckled face, who was really at home on horseback in the wilds of his native land, but at a loss on the streets of Paris where he found himself frequently without much money. Viticulture was not paying well at this time in California, and Archie's father, in cutting down expenses all around, chose to begin with Archie, who had not done anything to assist the family fortunes. Archie took it good-naturedly and kept usually cheerful, though seedy and often hungry. He felt that his was the typical story of the artist, and if he would only persist, in spite of poverty and discouragement, he must ultimately become a great painter because of his discomfiture.

"They can't freeze me out!" was a common saying on his lips, given with a toss of the head and a smiling face which made an impression upon women. Also his whistling philosophy, phrased as, "You never know your luck!"

Miss Baxter, who had no great confidence in his ability, was kind to Archie Davis for the sake of California, where she had known his people, and because a single woman, no matter what her kind or

condition may be, likes to have some man within call. Adelle met him, as she met dozens of other men, in the easy intimacy of the studio. At first she did not regard him nor he her. Sadie Paul, who happened to be present at the time, pronounced him a "bounder," which made no great impression upon Adelle, any more than had Miss Comstock's "cad" for the banker. It was not until she had settled in Paris for the spring and was a fairly regular worker in the studio that Archie began to play a part in her life.

It is easy to see why they should draw together. Adelle, thanks to all the accessories that her money provided, presented a radiant and rare vision to the young Californian, who knew only women like Cornelia Baxter — mere workers — or the more vulgar intimacies of the streets and cafés. Adelle Clark did not resemble even the sturdy California lassies with whom he had been a favorite on the university campus. With her motors and gowns and jewels she was the exotic, the privileged goddess of wealth. To her Archie was at first mere Boy, then Youth. His seedy state did not disturb her. Though dainty in habit, she had not become delicate in instinct. And Archie's "freshness" amused her, his casual familiarity of the sort that exclaimed, while he fingered a bit of her handiwork, — "Say, girlie, but that is a peach of a ring! . . . Is it for Some One now?"

She laughed at his "freshness," and felt perfectly at home with him. It was not until after several

weeks of this acquaintanceship that the affair developed, unexpectedly, the opportunity being given.

One rainy April afternoon when Adelle arrived at the studio she found it empty except for the presence of Archie Davis, who was dozing on the divan in front of the small stove. Adelle had come briskly up the stairs from her car, and the ride through the damp air had given her pale cheeks some color. She threw back her long coat, revealing a rose-colored bodice that made her quite pretty. Then the two discovered themselves alone in the big studio. Adelle had a faint consciousness of the fact, but supposing that Miss Baxter would return, she tossed aside her wrap and with a mere "Hello, Archie!" went over to the corner where on a small bench she was wont to pound and chisel and twist.

"Say, but you look good enough to eat!" the youth remarked appreciatively.

Adelle laughed at the compliment.

"Why are you always thinking of eating?" she asked.

"I guess because a good meal don't often come my way," he yawned in reply.

Adelle wanted to find out why this was so, but could not frame her question to her satisfaction. Archie happened to be in one of those rare moments of melancholy introspection when he doubted even his divine calling to art. He was really hungry and somewhat cold, and life did not seem inviting.

"I don't know," he observed after a time, "as this art game is all it looks to be from a distance — that is," he added, watching Adelle with appreciative eyes, "unless you happen to have the dough to support it on the side."

"Are n't you painting?" Adelle asked after another pause.

"Nope!"

"Why not?"

"I can't paint when I'm feeling bad."

"What's the matter?" . . .

According to the novelists love-making — "the approach of the sexes" — is an affair of infinite precision and fine intention; but according to nature, at least in those less self-conscious circles wherein are found the vast majority, it is one of the casual and apparently aimless forms of human contact. For a good hour these two played the ancient game, but the movements, the articulate ones, at least, were of the last degree of banality and insignificance — too trivial to recite even here.

That consciousness of being alone with a young man, which had come over Adelle on her entrance, developed gradually into a pleasant sense of intimacy with Archie. Miss Baxter did not come back to make the tea, as she usually did at this hour. Adelle was acutely aware that the young man had counted on getting this tea and really needed the nourishment. She wanted to give him food, to be kind to him. At last she ventured to suggest, — "Don't you know

some place around here where we could get something to eat? I guess Miss Baxter is n't coming back this afternoon."

Archie instantly rose to the suggestion: he knew all the restaurants within the radius of two miles. And so, escorted by the young man, Adelle was soon entering a discreet small café, where, after infinite conversation with the proprietor, a tepid concoction was served with some excellent small cakes. Adelle then had one of the purest joys of her existence in watching the gusto with which the young Californian dispatched his tea and cakes even to the last crumbs of the *brioche*. She wanted to ask him to dine with her somewhere, but did not dare. In time they went back to the studio, which was now dark and still deserted, and after puttering for another half-hour Adelle departed in her car for the Villa Ponitowski. Nothing more momentous than what has been related happened, but both felt profoundly that something had happened. Archie, less daring or more skillful than his predecessor, did not press his advantage, — did not even ask to accompany the girl home, — and Adelle was left with the happy illusion of a mysterious human interest.

XXII

At last Adelle had a young man! He was not much of a young man in the eyes of Miss Comstock or Irene Paul, perhaps, but Adelle did not care for that. Incipient love awoke in the girl all her latent power of guile. This time she did not "give herself away" to "Pussy" nor to her companions, knowing instinctively that her toy would be taken away from her if it was discovered. For two months she managed almost daily meetings with Archie Davis without arousing the suspicion of any one, except possibly Miss Baxter, who did not consider the matter seriously. When late in May Miss Comstock took it into her head to motor to Italy for a trip to the Lakes and Venice, Adelle tried her best to escape, but failed. She departed sulkily, and managed to scrawl a letter and post it privately almost every day. Each mile that bore her farther from Paris filled her heart with gloom, and she made mad plans of escape. Her emotions having at last been stirred dominated her exclusively. She wanted Archie every moment. She wrote him to meet the party, casually, somewhere. But Archie, alas, was altogether too poor to follow his lady about Europe. She would have sent him the money for the journey if she had known how to do it. Instead, she sent him picture postcards of

the monuments of southern France and northern Italy.

It was in Venice one languid afternoon in early June, as she was coming out from Cook's, where she had been to get her mail, that she heard her name, —"Adelle! . . . Miss Clark,"—and looking around discovered her lover leaning against a pillar of the piazza. He had somehow found the means to follow her, arriving that morning by the third-class train, and had hung around the piazza, confident that the girl must appear in this center of civic activity. They at once took to a gondola as the safest method of privacy. And it was in this gondola, behind the little black curtains of the *felza*, that Adelle received her second kiss from the lips of a man. But this time due preparation had been made: the kiss was neither unexpected nor undesired, and on her part, at least, the embrace had all the fervor of nature.

As they floated out upon the still waters of the lagoon beyond the lonely hospital, with the translucent silver haze of the magic city hanging above them, Adelle felt that heaven had been thrust unexpectedly into her arms. This was something far beyond the magic touch of her lamp, and all the sweeter because it came to her as a personal gift, independent of her fortune. At least she felt so. It is permissible to doubt if Archie Davis would have been sufficiently stirred by a penniless girl to have spent his recent remittance in chasing her to Italy,

but such fine discriminations about young love are cruel. Sufficient for them both, in these gray and golden hours of the June afternoon in Venice, that they had come together. In time Adelle learned just how the miracle had been worked. Father Davis's remittance to take his son back to the ranch had at last arrived with a rather acid letter of parental instructions from the wine-grower. Archie with the true recklessness of youth had torn the letter to shreds and cashed the draft, purchased a third-class ticket for Venice, and put almost all that was left of the money into a much-needed suit of clothes. And now?

Adelle, with an unexpected acuteness, felt that Archie even in his present rehabilitated condition would be an object of suspicion to the keen eyes of Pussy Comstock, whom she was beginning to find troublesome. And she felt quite inadequate to explaining Archie plausibly. So it was decided between the lovers before the gondola returned to the city that they should meet clandestinely while the party remained in Venice. It was the family habit to take prolonged siestas after the second breakfast, when Adelle would be free to slip forth and join Archie in the cool recesses of a neighboring church. Other opportunity might arise. Young love is content with little — or thinks it will be. They parted with a final kiss, and Adelle thoughtfully paid the boatmen when they landed at the piazzetta.

There followed for one week the most exciting and

the most taxing episode in Adelle's small existence. She never had time for naps or odd moments of indolent nothings. In spite of the languorous heat, she became alert and schemed all her waking moments how best to make time for Archie. After a few days she bribed her maid so that she could get out of the hotel to a gondola after the others had gone to their rooms for the night. It was all a piece of pure recklessness, and Adelle was hardly adept enough to have carried it on long without detection. Fortunately, Miss Comstock was much occupied with some important English people, for whose sake she had really dragged the party down to Venice. And for seven days Adelle spent rapturous hours behind the black curtains of a gondola, varied by hardly less exciting hours of planning to bring her joy once more to her lips. Then Miss Comstock's English friends departed and the family set out for the North. They went by the International and Archie followed more slowly by the *omnibus*. He overtook the party at Lucerne, but Lucerne is not as well adapted as Venice for the shy retreats of love. They were content to return to Paris, where they imagined their liberty would be less circumscribed. . . .

It was at Lucerne that Adelle's lover demanded rather brusquely why she was "so mortal scared of the schoolma'am?" Was she not a young woman of nineteen and of independent means, without the annoying necessity of consulting her parents in her

choice of a lover? This put it into Adelle's mind that in the last resort she might defy Pussy and have her precious one all to herself in untrammeled freedom — in other words, marry Archie. But she was really afraid of Miss Comstock, and also doubtful of what her guardian, the trust company, might do to her. For the present she was content, or nearly so, with what she had, and was not thinking much about marriage. Her lover must be satisfied with stolen moments and secret meetings in public places, with an occasional kiss.

Marriage was really the only solution, and Archie knew it. If Adelle had not been possessed of such a very large golden spoon, the whole affair might have resulted differently and more disastrously. But her fortune both endangered and protected her. For Archie was no worse and no better than many a young man of his antecedents and condition. It is, perhaps, to be doubted if he would have contented himself indefinitely with innocent love-making, if the girl had not been so far removed from him in estate. . . . He meant to marry Adelle when he could, which meant as soon as it would be safe for her to marry. That might not be for another two years, until she was mistress of herself in law and of her fortune.

Shortly after their return to Paris, the "home" at Neuilly was closed for the summer and the family went to Étretat to occupy a villa that Adelle had leased previous to her infatuation. There seemed no

way of escaping Étretat without betraying her real reasons. She said something about staying on in Paris through June to work in the studio, but Pussy firmly closed the house and shipped the servants to Adelle's villa. If she only had not chosen Étretat, she wailed to Archie, but some nearer Normandy watering-place from which she might have motored up to Paris on one excuse or another and thus had glimpses of her lover! He must come to Étretat. But Archie was again without funds, living on the bounty of a hospitable fellow-countryman. After a fortnight of loneliness beside the sea, Adelle invented an elaborate pretext to return to Paris, but Miss Comstock insisted on accompanying her and stuck so closely to her side during three hot days that there was no chance for a sight of Archie. At last Adelle was sulkily dragged back to Étretat. Then she asked Miss Baxter to visit her and induced that good-natured young woman to send Archie a sufficient sum of money, as coming from an admirer of his art, to enable him to take up his residence in the neighborhood. Miss Baxter demurred over "giving him such a head," but finally was persuaded. Archie Davis was probably more surprised than ever before in his life to learn that one of his loose efforts on canvas had so impressed an American amateur of the arts that the latter had given Miss Baxter a five-hundred-dollar check for him and an order for a seascape from the Brittany shore. Behold Archie established at Pluydell in a picturesque thatched cottage with

his easel and paint-box! Pluydell is on the road from Étretat to Fécamp, and not over ten minutes' ride in a swift motor-car from the villa that Adelle occupied.

The young man painted intermittently during August, and Adelle discovered a mad passion for driving her new runabout alone, which her friends naturally voted quite "piggy" in her. If she was occasionally bullied into taking a companion with her, she drove the car so recklessly around the roughest country lanes that the friend never asked for another chance to ride with her. And thus she was free many times to make the dash over the familiar bit of chalk road, leave her car beneath the yellow rose-vine that covered the cottage, and walk across the sand to that particular corner of the wide beach where the young American had established himself with umbrella and painting tools. . . .

What did they do with themselves all the hours that Adelle contrived to snatch for her Archie? First there was a good deal of kissing. Adelle grew fonder of this emotional expression as she became accustomed to it, and sometimes rather wearied Archie with her tenderness. Then there was a good deal of affectionate fondling, rumpling his red hair, pulling his clothes and tie into place, criticizing his appearance and health. Adelle when she was at the doll age never had had a chance for these things, and now all her woman's instincts began to bloom at once. She wanted to dress and care for her treasure

and deluged him with small trinkets, many of them made by her own somewhat bungling hands. After these more intimate desires had been gratified, Adelle might take a critical look at the canvas over which Archie was dawdling and pronounce it "pretty" or "odd," or ask what it was meant to be. Then throwing herself down on the sand or turf and pulling her broad straw hat over her face she prepared for "talk." "Talk" consisted mostly of question and answer,—

"Where did you go last night?"

"Casino."

"Whom did you see at the casino?"

"Same crowd."

"Did you play?"

"Just a little."

"Did you win?"

"Yep!"

"Much?"

"A couple of plunks," etc.

Or, —

"Did Pussy catch you last night?"

"No! Never said a word."

"Who was the man you were walking with?"

"Oh, that little man with the glasses — he's a friend of Pussy's, English."

Perhaps as follows, —

"Pussy is talking of our all going to India next winter."

"India; — what for?"

"She always wants to go some place."

"You are n't going to India?" (Lover's alarms.)

"Of course I shan't!"

One easily might undervalue Adelle's passion, however, if it were judged solely by its intellectual quality. The beauty and the wonder of passion is that it cannot be weighed by any mental scales, its terms are not transferable. Adelle's share of the universal mystery, in spite of the banality of its expression, may have been as great as any woman's who ever lived. At least it filled her being and swept her to unexpected heights of feeling and power.

She was completely happy at this time, but Archie after the first days was restless and somewhat bored. There were long periods when he could neither make love nor paint, and he took to spending his idle evenings at the Casino, which was not good for his slender purse. As the weeks passed and their ruses seemed successful, the two grew more reckless and indulged in flying expeditions about the country roads in Adelle's little car. One evening, as they were returning in the sunset glow from a long jaunt down the coast, Adelle at the wheel and Archie's arm encircling her waist, they came plump upon Irene Paul and Pussy Comstock in a hired motor. Adelle stiffened and threw on high speed. They dashed past in a whirl of dust, but the Paul girl's eyes met Adelle's. She felt sure of Irene, and hoped that Pussy had not recognized them. But they must be more careful in the future. If Pussy found out —

well, they must "do something." This time she should n't be deprived of Archie. Never!

Adelle dressed slowly, revolving in her mind what she should say to Irene, who had called Archie a "bounder," and descended to the salon where the family were waiting for her. Nothing was said until they were seated at the dinner-table. Irene obstinately kept her eyes away and Adelle felt troubled. Suddenly Miss Comstock, looking across the table with her penetrating smile, asked sweetly, — "Don't you find it difficult to drive as you were this afternoon, Adelle?"

Like all clumsy persons Adelle lied and lied badly. She had not been on the road since she took Eveline to the Casino. Pussy must have been mistaken. Miss Comstock did not press the point, but Irene Paul looked at Adelle and smiled wickedly. Adelle knew that she had been betrayed and her heart sank. Presently Miss Comstock began to talk about the red-haired artist who was living in a picturesque cottage out on the Pluydell road. A very ordinary young American, she observed cuttingly. Had the girls seen him sketching? Adelle knew that the blood was mounting to her pale face, and she bent her head over her food. The end had come.

That evening they went to the Casino to hear the music, and by chance Archie was there, too, and threw self-conscious glances towards their table. Between the soothing strains of Franz Lehr, Pussy whispered into Adelle's ear, —

"Why don't you bow to your young friend? He looks as if he wanted to join us."

Adelle gazed at her tormentor pitifully, but said nothing. The rest of the evening she sat in cold misery trying to think what might happen, resolved that in any case the worst should not happen: she would not lose her Archie. She returned to the villa in dumb pain to await in her room the expected visit. She did not even undress, preferring to be ready for instant action. Soon there was a knock and Pussy entered. She was in her dressing-gown and looked formidable and unlovely to the girl.

"Adelle," she said with a sneer, sitting down before the fire, "I thought you knew too much to do this sort of thing."

Adelle was silent.

"And such a common bounder, too!"

It was Irene Paul's opprobrious epithet, which Adelle was beginning to comprehend. She winced, but made no reply.

"You might easily get yourself into serious trouble, my dear, with a man like that."

Adelle cowered under the stings of her lash and said nothing.

"I shall write the young man to-morrow that if he wants to see you he had better pay his visits here," she said tolerantly. "This is your house — you can see him here, you know. There are ways and ways of doing such things, my dear."

With a yawn and a hateful smile Pussy departed.

It was over, and she was alive. At first Adelle felt relieved until she pondered what it meant. Archie would be exposed to the keen shafts of Pussy's contempt and to the girls' titters and snubs. And probably there would be no chance at all for the kissing and all the rest. It was Pussy's clever way of effectually disposing of Archie. She understood that.

Adelle stayed awake for several hours, a most unusual occurrence, revolving matters in her confused mind. When she could stand it no longer she got up, dressed herself carefully in her motoring dress, and stole downstairs through the silent house, out to the garage which was at the other end of the garden. Eveline's little Pomeranian squeaked once, but did not arouse the household. Adelle cranked her car feverishly and succeeded at last, after much effort, in starting the engine and in pushing back the garage door. It was by far the most desperate step in life she had ever taken, and she felt ready to faint. She clambered into the car and released the clutch, more dead than alive, as she thought. With a leap and a whir she was down the road to Archie's cottage.

XXIII

SAFELY there she felt more composed. Stopping her engine she got out and walked to the window of the room on the ground floor that she knew the young Californian occupied. It was open. Leaning through the rose-vine she called faintly, — "Archie! Archie!" But the young painter slept solidly, and she was forced to take a stick and poke the bunch of bedclothes in the corner before she could arouse the sleeping Archie. When he came to the window, she exclaimed, —

"Something awful has happened, Archie!"

"What's the row?"

"We're found out. Pussy knows and the girls. Irene told 'em!"

That apparently did not seem to Archie the ultimate catastrophe that it did to her. He stood in his pajamas beside the window, ungallantly yawning and rubbing his eyes.

"Well," he observed, "what are you going to do about it?"

Doubtless to his masculine good sense it seemed merely adding folly to folly thus to run away from the villa at midnight and expose them to further trouble.

Adelle did not argue nor explain.

"Put your clothes on," she said, with considerable decision, "and come out to the car."

Thereupon she went back to the car, cranked it afresh, and waited for him to appear. He came out of the rose-covered window, after a reasonable time, and climbed in beside the girl. She seemed to expect it, and there was not anything else to do. Adelle threw in the clutch and started at a lively pace, turning into the broad highroad which ran in a straight line southwards towards the French capital.

"What are you going to do?" Archie asked, now seriously awake and somewhat disturbed.

"I'm never going back to that place again," the girl flamed resolutely. "Never!"

As if to emphasize a vow she threw one arm around her lover's neck and drew his face to hers so that she could kiss it, — a maneuver she executed at some risk to their safety. "Oh, Archie, I love you so — I can't give you up!" she whispered by way of explanation.

He returned her kiss with good will, though mentally preoccupied, and said, "Of course not, dearest!" and continued to hold her while she steered the car, which was traveling at a lively rate along the empty *route nationale* in the direction of Paris. And thus they proceeded for mile after mile or rather ten kilometres after ten kilometres. Adelle and the car seemed to be inspired by the same energy and will. Archie realized that they were going rapidly to Paris and felt rather frightened at first. It was one thing

to make love to an heiress not yet of age, but another to elope with her across France at night. Archie was not sure, but he thought there might be legal complications in the way of immediate matrimony. He might be getting himself in for a thoroughgoing scrape, which was not much to his liking. But there seemed no way of stopping Adelle or the car.

For Adelle had no doubts. It was the greatest night of her life. She drove the car recklessly, but splendidly. Every now and then she would turn her pale face to her lover and say peremptorily, — "Kiss me, Archie!" — and Archie dutifully gave the kiss, which seemed to be all the stimulant she needed.

The wild rush through the night beside her lover appeased something within her. It answered her craving for romance, newly awakened, for daring and desperation and achievement of bliss. She felt exalted, proud of herself, as if she were vindicating her claim to character. To-morrow, when Pussy Comstock and the girls found that she had gone, they would know that she was no weak fool. And by that time, of course, it would all be over — irrevocable.

"You'll marry me as soon as we get there," she remarked once to Archie in exactly the same tone as she said, "Kiss me, Archie." The young man falteringly replied, — "Of course, if we can."

"Of course we can! Why not?" Adelle replied firmly. "Americans can marry any time."

She felt sure that speedy marriage was an inalienable right that went with American citizenship to-

gether with the privilege of getting divorced whenever one cared to. Archie was by no means so sure of this point, but he thought it well not to discuss it until they both had more exact information. So the car bowled along through the night at a good forty miles an hour.

Long before they reached Paris the sun had come up out of the hot meadows along the road and they were forced to stop at Chartres for *petrol* and breakfast. Adelle wanted to cut the breakfast to a bowl of hot coffee, but Archie firmly insisted that they must be braced with food for the ordeal before them. She yielded to Archie and reluctantly descended from her seat, stiff with fatigue but elated. After breakfast Archie suggested that they should leave the car at the inn and proceed to Paris conventionally by train. But Adelle would not give up one kilometre of her great dash for liberty and Archie. Nor would she consider his going on by train to make arrangements for the marriage.

So they resumed their rapid flight, but mishaps with tires began, and it was noon before they entered the Porte Maillot. As they drove past the Villa Ponitowski, Adelle looked furtively up at the shutters as if she expected to see Pussy's severe face lurking there. She guided the machine to the Rue de l'Université and stopped beneath Miss Baxter's studio windows. If Archie had proposed it, she would have gone at once to a hotel with him and registered, but he prudently suggested the studio,

where he hoped to find Cornelia Baxter. But the sculptress had gone away somewhere, and the big room was empty — also hot and dusty. They sat down before the fireless stove and looked at each other.

Adelle was very tired and on the verge of hysterical tears. Archie had not been very efficient in the tire trouble. She felt that now, at any rate, he should take hold of their situation and manage. But Archie seemed helpless, was not at home in the situation. (If Adelle had had more experience she might have been chilled even now by his conduct and managed her life differently.)

"I'm so tired," she moaned, throwing herself down on the divan. "Don't you love me, Archie?"

Of course he did, but he did not offer to embrace her, and she was obliged to go over to where he sat in a wilted attitude and embrace him.

"You are mine now for always," she said, almost solemnly.

"Yes," he admitted, as if he did not exactly like the form in which the sentiment had been expressed.

"What are we going to do?"

"Get some food first. I'm starved, are n't you?"

Adelle, weary as she was, might not consider food as of the first importance in this crisis, but recognizing Archie's greater feebleness, she yielded to his desire for refreshment. So they drove to Foyot's and consumed two hours more in lunching delectably. Archie seemed somewhat aimless after *dejeuner*,

perhaps he did not know just how to attack his formidable problem. It was Adelle who suggested that they drive to her banker's and inquire how to get married in American fashion in France. Adelle felt that bankers knew everything. It was a very elegant and bewildered young Frenchman whom they found alone in this vacation season at the bank which Adelle used. After he understood what they wanted he directed them to their consul. Adelle knew the American consulate because she had been there to sign papers, and turned the car into the Avenue de l'Opéra with renewed hope. They stopped before the building from which the American flag was languidly floating and mounted the stairs to the offices. In the further room, beyond the assortment of deadbeats that own allegiance to the great American nation, was a little Irish clerk, who in the absence of the consul and his chief assistant held up the dignity of the United States. He was a political appointee from the great State of Illinois, and after an apprenticeship in the City Hall of Chicago was much more familiar with hasty matrimony than either of the two flustered young persons who demanded his advice. To Adelle's blunt salutation, "We want to get married, please!" and then, as if not sufficiently impressive, — "Now — right off!" he replied agreeably, not taking the time to remove the cigarette from his mouth, — "Sure! That's easy."

And he made it easy for them. He found the neces-

sary blank forms in an office desk and filled them out according to the information the couple gave him. Adelle in deference to Archie's scruples stretched a point and made herself of age. When the formalities had been completed, the young Irishman called in from the outer office one of the hangers-on who happened to be a seedy minister of the gospel and who looked as if he were in Paris by mistake.

Thus almost before Archie knew it he had taken to himself Adelle Clark as wife, the ceremony being witnessed by the consular clerk, — Morris McBride of Chicago, — and an ex-sailor on his way back to New York of the name of Harrington. Adelle distributed the remaining pieces of gold in her purse in the way of *pour-boires*, and then the two found themselves in the runabout on the Avenue de l'Opéra — married.

"I did n't know it could be done so easily," Archie observed breathlessly.

"Anything can be done when you want to, if you have the money," Adelle replied, evincing how thoroughly she had mastered the philosophy of the magic lamp.

"And what shall we do now?" her husband inquired.

(They say that in marriage the first trivial events are significant of what will happen thereafter, like straws upon the stream betraying which way the current flows. Possibly Archie's question indicates the quality of this marriage, also the fact that presently Adelle set their course.)

The consular clerk, judging that his compatriots were affluent, had hinted at the propriety of a wedding feast at the Café de Paris; but Adelle, who hated dinners, vetoed the suggestion. Archie was for returning unsentimentally to the empty studio for their wedding night, as they were short of cash and it was after banking hours. But Adelle had not dashed madly across half of France in the night to spend the first hours of her honeymoon in a dusty, hot studio on the Rue de l'Université. She turned the car into the great Avenue and swept on past the Arch, through the Bois, out into the open country. Ultimately the lack of *petrol* stopped them at a little wayside *cabaret* some miles outside of the fortifications, where, too exhausted to proceed farther, they decided to spend the night.

XXIV

FORTUNATELY Adelle was not of an imaginative habit of mind. She rarely envisaged with keenness anything of the future, and thus escaped many of the perplexities and annoyances of life, with some of its pleasures. Hers was always a single road, — from desire to the gratification of desire, — as it had been with Archie. Thus far her nature had developed few disturbing impulses, which accounts for the simple, not to say dull, character of her story up to the present. Even the supreme desire of woman's heart had come to her in a commonplace way and had been fulfilled precipitately, as the desires of the untutored usually are, but uncomplexly. As she fondly contemplated her husband the next morning, she did not realize that in one swift day she had accomplished the main drama of her existence and henceforth must be content with the humdrum course of life. Archie was scarcely more concerned with mental complexities.

"Won't Pussy Comstock be jarred!" was about the depth of his reaction to the momentous step they had taken.

Adelle smiled a wary smile in answer: she distinctly enjoyed having both outwitted Pussy and escaped the bother of opposition to her desires and the shafts

of ridicule. She stroked her master's bright red hair and kissed him again. They felt very well content with themselves this morning. Archie certainly ought to have congratulated himself. He had a young wife, who loved him to distraction and who was extremely well-to-do, and, moreover, had no inconvenient relatives to "cut up ugly" over her imprudent step. There was only a trust company to reckon with, and what can a trust company do when it feels fussed and aggrieved? . . .

After a leisurely breakfast and more love-making under the plane trees in the little garden behind the inn, the pair had to reckon with fact. They must get some money at once: they had only enough loose silver in their two purses to pay the modest charges at the *cabaret* and buy a litre or two of *petrol* to get them to Paris. Yet they dallied on in the way of young love and drove up to the bank just before it closed. When Adelle in her nonchalant manner asked the young man at the window to give her five thousand francs in notes, she received a great shock — the worst shock of her life. The young cashier, who had paid out to her through the little brass *guichet* many tens of thousands of pretty white notes and gold-pieces, informed her that he could not give her any money. It developed, under a storm of exclamation and protest, that only that noon the bankers had received a cablegram from their correspondent in America curtly directing them not to cash further drafts drawn by Miss Clark against

the Washington Trust Company. The magic lamp had gone out most inopportunely! In vain Adelle expostulated, declared there was a mistake, even introduced to the cashier "my husband," who looked uncomfortable, but tried to assume authority and demanded reasons for the bank's treatment of his wife. All the reason lay in that brief cablegram. The couple at last turned dejectedly into the street and again got into Adelle's runabout, which obviously was in need of more *petrol.*

"It's Pussy," Adelle pronounced with divination.

"If it is, she's got in her fine work fast."

The two might reflect sadly that if they had been prudent, they would not have spent all that morning in love-making, having a lifetime for that, but would have taken prompt measures to secure funds as soon as the bank opened. Of course, it had never occurred to either of them that trouble would fall in just this way.

And now what was to be done? Adelle felt that they should drive at once to the Villa Ponitowski, secure her clothes and jewelry, and make Pussy, who she had no doubt was there, bank them until the embargo on her drafts was raised. But neither had what Archie called "the nerve" to do this. So they went for refuge to the only place they knew, Miss Baxter's studio.

There they found Miss Comstock. She had come to Paris, of course, by the first train the day before, arriving at the studio shortly after they had left in

search of food. She had vibrated between the studio and the Neuilly villa ever since, sure that when Adelle was short of funds she would go home to roost. And Pussy had taken immediate measures to cut off funds by cabling to the trust company the exact facts of Adelle's disappearance in company with the Californian. She received them amiably.

"My dear Adelle," she began, "you should not be so eccentric. You gave us all a shock! . . . I was coming up to Paris and would have been glad to motor up with you and — er — Mr. Davis, I believe." There was a deadly pause while she scrutinized the guilty couple through her glasses, as if she were determining the exact extent of the mischief already done. She looked disgustedly over the dusty studio and observed, — "It's not a sweet place for — er — love-making, is it? Why didn't you go to the Villa, my dear, and let Marie look after you?"

Archie laughed inanely. Adelle felt that she could not stand more of this feline fooling. She said bluntly,—

"We're married."

"Married! So soon! How — er — nice!" Pussy commented.

"Yes, we're married, Miss Comstock," Archie added lamely, mopping his brow.

"You don't mean that?" Miss Comstock said quickly, her tone changing.

Adelle nodded.

"Then it is really a serious matter."

Adelle's blood froze.

"I can't believe you have been such a fool," she said to the girl. "Or you such a scamp," she turned upon the frightened youth.

It seemed to Adelle that Pussy would have condoned anything or everything except that fatal visit to the consulate. Pussy's morals, she knew, were of the strictly serviceable sort, and she was gladder than ever that she had prodded Archie into having the ceremony performed at once. Now Pussy could do nothing but scold.

But Miss Comstock accepted only the inevitable, and she was not yet convinced that the visit to the consulate and the ceremony there constituted an inevitable marriage. She pleaded with Adelle to leave her so-called husband and come back with her to the Neuilly villa "until the matter could be straightened out, and an announcement of the marriage made to the world," as she was wily enough to put it. But Adelle was adamant. Archie, to whom the woman next appealed, was more yielding. She succeeded in frightening him, talking about the dangers of French laws that had to do with minors. Of course they had lied about Adelle's age, and there were all sorts of complications besides the scandal, which was perfectly needless in any case. And Miss Comstock assured them that the trust company would probably take every step to annul the marriage. There was a very hard road ahead of them if they persisted in their idiotic course. Finally she

even suggested that Archie might return to the Villa with them until his status could be determined. Adelle, however, feared Pussy's cleverness and would not stir from the studio. All through the protracted interview in this crisis, when her heart's desire was threatened, Adelle displayed surprising courage and steadfastness of purpose. Her courage naturally was an egotistic courage: it amounted in sum to this — nobody should take away her toy from her this time. And finally Miss Comstock retired from the scene defeated and somewhat venomous.

"I hope, my dear," she sent as a parting shot, "that Mr. Davis can give you the comforts you are used to. I think it may be extremely difficult for you to use your own money for the present."

Adelle seemed quite indifferent to the comforts she had been used to, although she well knew that there was not a five-franc piece in the studio, when Miss Comstock departed to cable the trust company the results of her interview. The trust company, it may be said in passing, was much upset over the news, and after consultation decided to send the third vice-president across the ocean to examine into the matter, Mr. Ashly Crane having declined to undertake the delicate mission. Meantime they did not rescind their instructions to their Paris correspondent, and so for some days to come the young people were reduced to absurd straits for the want of money.

After Pussy had gone, with her threat, Adelle

burst into tears and accused Archie of not supporting her in this battle. Was she not giving up everything for him? — etc. Archie had his first lesson in being the husband of an heiress, even a much-petted husband. It was finally learned, and kisses were exchanged. Then they thought to appease their hunger, which by this time was acute, and debated how this was to be done. Adelle was confident that on the morrow she could sell what jewelry she had with her for enough to support them pleasantly until she could make it right with the trust company and get hold of her lamp again. For this evening she borrowed five francs from the suspicious and unwilling concierge, and with the money Archie went forth to the corner and brought back a dubious mess of cold food and a bottle of poor wine, which they consumed in the dark studio, then went to sleep upon the divan in each other's arms like a couple of romance. Rather late in the day on the morrow Adelle sallied out in a cab to the Rue de la Paix confident that she would return with much gold. She found naturally that her own handiwork was unsalable at any price, and that the fashionable shops where she had dealt prodigally would not advance her a cent even upon their own wares. Pussy, she realized, had shut off also this avenue to ease! They were obliged to induce the concierge's wife to pledge at the pawnshop the more marketable things Adelle had with her. With the few francs thus derived they managed to picnic in the studio for the next week.

They became acquainted with busses and the *bateau mouche* and other lowly forms of transportation and amusement, but spent most of their time in the studio, love-making, of which Adelle did not weary. Archie was used to the devices of a short purse and Adelle thought it all a great lark for love's sake. Besides, it must end soon, and the high noon of prosperity return with the possession of her precious lamp. To hasten that event she wrote a rather peremptory note to the Washington Trust Company, notifying them of her change of name and complaining of the mistake they had made in cutting off her drafts. It would take a fortnight at the most to get a reply, and then all would be right. Archie did not feel so confident.

XXV

PROSPERITY did not return as completely as Adelle expected, nor as easily. Mr. Solomon Smith, the vice-president of the trust company, arrived in Paris in due course on the seventh day and fell naturally first into the hands of Miss Comstock. For Pussy, realizing to the full the consequences of this situation to herself as an exploiter of rich American girls from the very best families, had moved her family back to the Villa Ponitowski and had set the stage demurely and convincingly for the arrival of the trust company's emissary. She impressed Mr. Smith easily as an intelligent and prudent woman, who was terribly concerned over Adelle's false step, and quite blameless in the affair.

"Such an unfortunate accident," she explained to him, "from every point of view:—think of my dear girls, the example to them! . . . And such deceit, — one would not have expected it of the girl, I must say! . . . I know nothing whatever about the young man, except that he comes from the West — from California. One of my girls — a daughter of Hermann Paul, the rich San Francisco railroad man, you know — tells me that this Davis fellow is of most ordinary people, what is called a 'bounder,' you know. Adelle naturally did not meet him here,

but at the studio of one of her friends. I knew nothing whatever about it until just before the elopement — the very day before, in fact, when I surprised them together in a motor-car. I spoke to the girl that night, of course, kindly but severely. I had no idea she could do such a thing! It must have been in her mind a long time. The girl showed great powers of duplicity, all the trickiness of a parvenue, to be quite frank. I never had a girl of such low tastes, I may say; — all my girls are from the very best families, most carefully selected."

Thus Miss Comstock skillfully contrived to throw the responsibility for Adelle's misstep upon her birth and upon the trust company which had brought her up. In doing this she but confirmed Mr. Smith in his opinion that the guardianship of minor girls was not a branch of the business that the Washington Trust Company should undertake. They lacked the proper facilities, as he would express it, and it was more of a nuisance than it was worth. He had had a tempestuous September passage across the ocean and dreaded the return voyage.

Having won a vantage-point Miss Comstock next proceeded to give a piquant account of Mr. Ashly Crane's dealings with the girl, who in a way had been his special charge.

"Fortunately I nipped that affair in the bud," she said, "although, as it turned out, I suppose he might have been less objectionable than the fellow she took. I am afraid that Mr. Crane lowered the

girl's ideals of manhood and thus paved the way for her fall," she added gravely.

Mr. Smith listened to the tale of Mr. Crane's futile attempt in rising astonishment and wrath. He was himself a married man with a family of growing daughters. He made a mental note of Mr. Crane's conduct, which ultimately terminated that promising young banker's career in finance with the trust company.

"Where is the girl?" he asked at the end, sighing. "I must see her, I suppose, though it seems too late to do anything now."

Pussy had sagely taken account of Mr. Solomon Smith's character and concluded that the banker was the sort of middle-class American who might insist upon the young couple's being married all over again in due form if he suspected anything irregular, and so to save bother all around she assured him that she herself had made inquiry at the consulate and found that the marriage performed there was binding enough, — "unless the trust company wished to intervene as guardian of the minor and contest its validity on the ground of misrepresentation of Adelle's age," which, of course, must involve considerable scandal.

"It would be very unpleasant, indeed," she said meaningly.

The banker, who hated all publicity for himself and for his institution, hastened to say that he had no idea of taking such action; merely wished to be

sure that the girl was really married and that her children, if any came to her, would be born in lawful wedlock. Miss Comstock hid a smile and set his mind at rest on that point.

(One sequel of this affair, by the way, was the prompt conclusion of Mr. Morris McBride's diplomatic career: he returned presently to a patient fatherland to renew in Cook County, Illinois, his services to the Republican Party.)

After a delectable luncheon at Miss Comstock's, Mr. Smith drove alone from the Neuilly villa to Miss Baxter's studio, where he found the young couple somewhat in négligé, recovering from one of the concierge's indigestible repasts, funds now running too low to permit them to indulge in restaurant life. The untidy studio and the disheveled couple themselves made a very bad impression upon the trust company's officer, who loathed from the depths of his orderly soul all slatternness and especially "bohemian art." He examined the young husband through his horn-bowed glasses so sternly that Archie slunk into the darkest corner of the studio and remained there during the banker's visit, which he left to Adelle to bear. Mr. Smith could not be harsh with the young bride, no matter how foolish and wrong-headed he thought her.

"Mrs. — er — Davis," he began, going straight to the point like a business man, "I am informed that you are regularly married. It might be possible to have such a marriage as you have chosen to make

set aside on the ground that you are a minor — still a ward of an American court — and misrepresented your age to the consular officer."

Adelle opened her gray eyes in consternation. Were they, after all, thinking of taking Archie from her? But she was reassured by the trust officer's next words.

"Your guardians, however, will in all likelihood not take any such steps — I shall not recommend it. Although you yet lack eighteen months of being legally of age, and of course ought not to have married without our consent, nevertheless you are of an age when many young women assume the responsibilities of marriage. The facts being what they are," — he paused to look around disgustedly at the evidences of the picnicking *mênage*, — "I see no use in our interfering now in this unfortunate affair."

Adelle's pale face brightened. He was a good old sort, she thought, and was n't going to make trouble, after all, — merely lecture them a bit, and she composed her face properly to receive his scolding. It came, but it was not very bad, at least Adelle did not feel its sting.

"It is also needless for me to pain you," he began, "by telling you what I — what every mature person — must think of your rash step. Its consequences upon your own future life will probably manifest themselves only too soon. For a young girl like you, carefully brought up under the best educational influences, and still in the charge of a — er

— companion, — " Adelle smiled demurely at Mr. Smith's difficulty in finding the right word to describe Pussy Comstock, — "to deceive the kind watchfulness, the confidence reposed in you, and carry on clandestine relations" — What's that? thought Adelle — "with the first young fellow who presents himself, indicates a serious lack on your part of something that every woman should have to — er — to cope with life successfully," he concluded, letting her down at the end softly.

This long sentence, by the way, was an interesting composite of several "forms" that Mr. Smith used frequently on different occasions. It did not impress Adelle as it should. She felt, as a matter of fact, that in deceiving Pussy, she had merely pitted her feeble will and intelligence against a much stronger one of an experienced woman, who was none too scrupulous in her own methods. Also that in acting as she had in running away with Archie, she had displayed the first real gleam of character in her whole life. But she could not put these things into words. So she let Mr. Smith continue without protest, which was the best way.

"As for the husband you have chosen, I know nothing about him of course. I can only say that men of standing have slight regard for any man who takes advantage of the weakness and folly of a schoolgirl, especially when he has everything to gain financially from her and nothing to give."

Archie winced at this truthful statement and ner-

vously dropped a palette with which he had been fussing. It clattered to the floor and broke, setting the nerves of all three on edge.

"Such a man," Mr. Smith proceeded in his most acid tones, glaring at Archie, "is properly called an adventurer, and rarely if ever proves to have character enough to retain the respect of the woman he has wheedled into sacrificing herself."

This was a bit unfair, for Archie had been wheedled rather than wheedled Adelle. Moreover, the world is full, as Mr. Smith must surely know, of young men who have committed matrimony with girls financially to their advantage and who have retained not only their own self-respect, but won the admiration of their acquaintances into the bargain for their skill and good luck.

And Adelle resented the slur for Archie even more than the young man did. She felt vaguely that Archie ought to do something to demonstrate that he was not a worthless character, possibly kick Mr. Smith out of the studio, at least protest at being called a "cad" and "adventurer." But Archie took it all meekly and busied himself with recovering the pieces of the broken palette from the floor. Mr. Smith did not press his dialectic advantage; in other words, did not specifically hit Archie again. Perhaps a human compunction, for the sake of the young girl who had just rashly hazarded her life's happiness with the young man, restrained him. He turned instead again to Adelle in a gentler tone.

"I feel sincerely sorry for you, Mrs. Davis. A young woman in your position, without family or near friends to shield her, is exposed to all the evil selfishness of the world. You have succumbed, I am afraid, to a delusion, although the trust company did its best to supply your lack of natural protectors, to shield you."

He reflected, perhaps, that the trust company had been, even from the easy American standard, a rather negligent parent, chiefly concerned with its ward's fortune, and hastened to say defensively, — "We placed you with an excellent woman," — Adelle had placed herself, but it made no difference, — "one in whom we have every confidence not only as a teacher, but also as a friend and guide." Even Adelle smiled broadly at this description of Pussy. "But all our care has been in vain: you have put us now where we cannot help you further!"

Adelle lowered her eyes, but felt happier — the sermon was coming to an end.

"It is useless for me to continue, however. It rests with you alone, with you and your husband," — he pronounced the term with infinite scorn, — "to prove that your rash choice is not what it seems, — the end of your career, the end of your happiness. And it rests with you, sir," he added severely, looking over at Archie, "to prove that you are man enough to be a kind husband to the girl who has married you under such circumstances. I sincerely hope that your future will be better than your act promises!"

Here was another opening for the kick, but Archie failed to grasp it. He took his cue from Adelle and maintained a sulky silence.

"There remains but one more thing for me to speak of, Mrs. Davis, and that is your property, of which the trust company must continue guardian for nearly two years more until you become of age and the company is released from its guardianship by the court."

The couple pricked up their ears with relief at the mention of property.

"You have shown yourself to be prodigal in expenditure," Mr. Smith remarked, pulling from his pocket a card with a list of figures. "This past year you drew very nearly if not quite thirty-eight thousand dollars, — altogether too much money, I should say, for a young woman to spend safely."

"It was the cars and the Nile trip," Adelle murmured.

"Fortunately it happens to be well within the income of your estate, and so I suppose I cannot raise objections except upon moral grounds. It is too much money for any woman to spend wisely!"

Mr. Smith apparently had positive convictions on this subject. Adelle did not seem to care what he thought a woman could spend wisely.

"And so I propose that for the remainder of the time while you are nominally under our guardianship the trust company shall allow you — " He paused as if debating the figure with himself, and Archie

unconsciously walked a couple of steps nearer the others. Alas! It drew Mr. Smith's attention from Adelle, for whom he was sorry, to the cause, as he thought, of her misfortune. Whatever had been in his mind he said curtly, looking at Archie, "Five thousand dollars a year, to be paid in quarterly installments on your personal order, Mrs. Davis."

The young people looked at him aghast. As a matter of fact, five thousand dollars a year was not penury, at least to Archie, who had rarely seen a clear twelve hundred from January to January. Even Adelle, after her training in the Church Street house, might at a pinch hold herself in for eighteen months, all the more as after that period of probation she could not be prevented by the trust company from indulging herself to the full extent of her income. Adelle, indeed, who was still somewhat vague about the limitations and possibilities of money, was not as much annoyed as Archie. But she knew that she was being punished for her conduct in running away with Archie by this disagreeable old man, and she resented punishment as a child might resent it. Mr. Smith, observing the signs of discontent with his announcement, remarked with increased decision and satisfaction: —

"I am sure that will be best for both of you. Especially for you, Mrs. Davis! It will give you an opportunity to find out how much you care for each other, without the luxuries that wealth brings. And it will protect you, my dear, from — er — the indis-

cretions of a young husband, who has not been accustomed to the use of much money, I gather."

Undoubtedly Mr. Smith thought he was acting wisely towards them, — "Just as I would if it had been my own daughter," according to his report to President West. As a matter of fact, he acted precisely as parents are only too prone to act, with one third desire for the best interests of the parties concerned and two thirds desire to have them punished for their folly. The punitive motive was large in Mr. Smith's decision to put the couple on short rations as long as he had the power to do so. He would have liked to tie up Adelle's fortune indefinitely, so that the young scamp who had married her for her money (as he was convinced) might get as little of it as possible. Unfortunately the trust company had no control after Adelle's twenty-first birthday, unless by that time experience should teach her the wisdom of voluntarily putting her fortune beyond her husband's reach; but, at any rate, for the next few months it could arbitrarily and tyrannically disappoint his hungry appetite, and that is what Mr. Smith meant to do. His psychology, unfortunately, was faulty. It was perhaps the poorest way of securing Adelle's happiness in the end, as he might have foreseen if he had been less conscientious and more human. . . .

Shortly after delivering his blow, Mr. Smith took his hat and left the studio without shaking hands with Archie, although he smiled frostily on the trust

company's ward and "hoped all would go well with her in her new life." All the way back to his hotel he congratulated himself for his dispatch, finesse, eloquence, and wisdom in handling a deplorable and difficult situation. Yet it is hard to see just what he had accomplished by crossing the ocean. He washed his hands of "the Clark girl" before he left Paris for his return voyage, and, like so many persons with whom the young heiress had dealings, never again actively entered her life.

XXVI

WHEN the studio door closed upon the emissary of the trust company, the young couple looked at each other a little ruefully. Archie kicked over a chair or two and expressed himself volubly, now that it was safe, upon the priggishness and meanness of such folks as Mr. Solomon Smith. Adelle might wish that he had expressed himself in these vigorous terms earlier, when there could have been discussion and a chance of modifying Mr. Smith's decision. But she realized how raw he was feeling from the old gentleman's contempt and sweetly put her arms around her husband's strong shoulders and kissed him tenderly.

"It won't be so bad, Archie," she said hopefully. "We'll get on somehow, I expect, and it is n't forever — not two years." She could recall much graver crises in life than being compelled to live for eighteen months with an adored companion on seventy-five hundred dollars, and people somehow survived them.

"It is n't just the money," Archie protested, a little shamed, but still grumpy. "It's his rotten talk. A feller does n't like being called all sorts of names."

"Well, he's gone now and he won't come back," Adelle remarked soothingly, with another effort to

caress her young lord into amiability and resignation to fate. That proved more difficult than usual: Archie felt the sting of the older man's taunts, especially the horrid word "adventurer" rankled in his subconsciousness. He saw himself reflected in the opinion of other men, — at least of stodgy, middle-aged men like Mr. Smith, who worked hard for what they got and had families, — and it ruffled him seriously. He was not in a happy temper otherwise. A fortnight of conjugal picnicking in the perpetual society of Adelle, whose conversational powers were limited, had chafed him. So Adelle had her first experience in that woman's pathetic task of endeavoring to soothe and harmonize the disturbed soul of her lord, who, she is aware, has only himself to blame for his state of spiritual discomfiture. But Adelle, like all her sisters who love, since the world began, rose nobly to her part.

Finally, they sallied forth and with some money that Adelle had contrived to extract, probably from the sale of another piece of real jewelry, they consoled themselves with an elaborate dinner at a famous restaurant in the Champs Élysées, and as it was a warm evening drove afterwards out to the Bois. The next day Adelle ventured forth to the bankers alone, and secured the first quarterly installment of the funds left there to her account by the prim Mr. Smith. With the notes and gold she hastened back to Archie, and the couple began to plan seriously for the future.

It is not my purpose to follow the pair in their erratic course during the next eighteen months, although it had its ludicrous as well as pathetic steps. That they were not ready for any sort of matrimonial partnership, is of course obvious, but as they shared their disability with a goodly proportion of young married people the world over, it does not count. Adelle, being the woman, learned her lesson more quickly than Archie, and under conceivable circumstances might have made as much of a success with her rash choice, in spite of Mr. Smith's prophecies, as many others make with their more prudently premeditated ones. She wanted to be married, and on the whole she was content when she got what she wanted, — at least, in the beginning, — which is the essential condition of marital comfort. But Archie had not by any means been as anxious to tie himself up for good as Adelle had been, and was more restive with what he found marriage to a rich — at least, expectantly rich — wife to be.

In a blind effort to find a congenial environment, they moved about over the map a good deal. First they went to Venice, of which Adelle especially had rosy memories associated with the dawn of love. They took a furnished apartment in an old palace over the Canal, and set up four swarthy, muscled rowers in blue sashes. Venice has been for many generations the haven of love, especially of irregular or illicit love: but its attraction evaporates swiftly after the ceremony has taken place. No spot where

the male cannot stretch himself and get away from domesticity for a few hours is safe except for the diviner, more ecstatic forms of passion. In a few weeks the couple became deadly bored with Venice and its picture postcard replica of life. At Archie's suggestion they next sought Munich, where some of his artist acquaintance had settled.

This was an atmosphere of work, more or less, and Adelle amused herself by thinking that she and her husband were members of that glorious band of free lances of art. They took a studio apartment and set up their crafts jointly. If either had had the real stuff of the artist, it might have gone well; but two idle and rather uninformed persons in the same studio produce disaster. Munich soon became an affair of beer, skittles, and music in company with the more careless spirits that gathered there that winter. Among them happened to be Sadie Paul.

A good deal had happened to the California sisters, and as the "two Pols" will come into Adelle's life later on, their story can be briefly given here. Irene, the sister who had brutally betrayed Adelle in a spirit of careless mischief, had attracted with her ripe California charm a young Englishman of family. Mr. Hermann Paul, the "San Francisco railroad man" referred to by Miss Comstock, meantime had died, and Irene had gone home to join her mother and younger brothers and ultimately was married to her Englishman. She divided her time thereafter about

equally between England and the new earthly paradise of the Pacific. Her sister Sadie had determined to remain in Europe, under other chaperonage than Pussy Comstock. It was rumored that a young Hungarian nobleman was hanging somewhere in the horizon, but for the present she played about with Adelle and Archie. Apparently Sadie Paul did not share her sister's prejudices about "the red-headed bounder," for she flirted unconcernedly with Archie as far as he would go, which to do Archie justice was not dangerously far. Adelle, good-natured and easy-going by disposition, welcomed the return of her old school friend and was not in the least disturbed by her flirtatious attempts with Archie. That sort of amorous pretense was more or less the habit of the world she had known, and besides, she was aware that Sadie was "having a desperate affair" with Count Zornec, the Hungarian referred to above, who was temporarily exiled to his remote estate. Indeed, she became the means of furthering this passion and speeding it to its destined end in matrimony, which has to do with a subsequent part of our tale. . . .

To return to the wanderings of Adelle and Archie, in the Easter holidays they left Munich for Switzerland for the winter sports, and in the spring Archie conceiving the idea that he wanted to do Dutch landscape, they went to Holland for a few weeks. That summer they rented a small villa along the Bay of Biscay and had Sadie Paul and her Count as

their guests for a time. The second winter of their marriage they spent in Paris, and by this time were rather hard-pressed for ready money, as neither had relaxed in wanting things and Adelle especially still had the habit of buying whatever attracted her attention, — bright-colored stuffs, jewels, and useless odds and ends of bric-á-brac, with the idea that sometime they should want to establish themselves permanently somewhere and purchases would all come in usefully. It was much as a bird gathers sticks, straws, and bright-colored threads, but in Adelle it was an expensive instinct. Towards the end of their period of probation, they had to get aid from money-lenders, to whom Sadie Paul introduced them. Adelle did not find it difficult to raise money on her expectations, at a stiff rate of interest, and thus the object of the Puritan Mr. Smith was defeated. It would have pained his thrifty banker's soul had he known that the trust company's ward was gayly paying ten and fifteen per cent for "temporary accommodation," while her own funds were barely earning five per cent in the careful investments of the trust company! When Adelle finally got hold of her fortune, a goodly sum had to be paid over to settle the claims of these obliging money-lenders. . . .

Of the quarrels, big and little, that the young couple had these first months it is useless to speak. Thus far they were neither excessively severe nor dangerously frequent — no worse, perhaps, than the

average idle couple must create in love's readjustment to prosaic fact. Adelle no longer believed that her Archie would be the great painter that she had once fondly dreamed of helping him to become. He was too lazy and fond of good things to eat and drink and other sensual rewards of life to become distinguished in anything, unless perchance he were well starved into discipline. His present life of comparative ease and expected wealth was the very worst thing for him as man and as artist. Like an over-fertilized plant he went to leaf and bore little fruit. And thus again Clark's Field, with its delayed expectations, had a baleful influence upon a new generation of human beings. The Davises had just enough money to wander loose over Europe, disturbed, as Addie had once been disturbed, by the hope of a more golden future.

Adelle herself was content not to work hard at the manufacture of jewelry, although if she had been encouraged, she might have become almost second-rate in this minor art. She, too, was indolent, if not by disposition, by training, and Europe offers abundant distraction of a semi-intellectual sort to fill the days of people like Archie and Adelle. To loaf herself was not so fatal for Adelle as to acquiesce in Archie's loafing, to accept the parasitic notion for her man that obtained in the easy-going circles she knew. "Oh, well," she said to Sadie, "why should Archie work if he doesn't want to?"

Sadie saw no reason and suggested,—"There

is n't one of those painters who would stick at it if he did n't have to."

Like all poor people, they had n't any luck; that was her idea. And Adelle cultivated another dangerous conception of marriage.

"It's enough for me if he's good to me and loves me — I have plenty of money for us both."

In other words, she thought that she should be satisfied to keep her lover always as an appanage of her magic lamp, to maintain a human being and a male human being as she might maintain a motor-car or an estate or a stable, as something desirable and pleasurable, contributing to her happiness, — the privilege of her fortunate position as a woman of means. There were many rich women who had that idea or cultivated it as a solace to their defeated souls.

"Is n't he a dear?" she would say to Sadie Paul in these moments of proud consciousness of possession; and conversely she would say sternly when some case of masculine errancy was brought to her notice, — "If Archie treated me like that, he'd find his bag packed and sitting outside the door!"

So she was very fussy about her husband's appearance, — his dress and manners and appointments; and insisted upon giving him every accessory of luxury, everything that rich men supposably enjoy. As her nearest and dearest possession, she was more concerned with his brave appearance than she was with her own. She "dolled" him up, as Sadie

Paul laughingly called it. "Is n't he cunning?" was one of her common expressions of marital happiness. Occasionally, in more serious moods, she might talk largely about Archie's "going into business" when they "got their money," but as time went on and Archie displayed little aptitude for managing money, she talked less about this. Adelle would have been content to buy the Basque villa they had rented and establish herself and Archie there in complete idleness and luxury, provided he would always be "good" to her, by which she meant faithful to those unconsidered marriage vows made in the Paris consulate, and not too cross.

And thus Archie and Adelle drifted on towards that great date of their complete emancipation from control, when all the riches of Clark's Field, now accumulating in the trust company's pool, should be handed over to them. That would be, indeed, the ultimate crisis for the old Field, when, having been finally transmuted into coin of the realm, it should cease to have an entity or any personal relation with the Clark race!

Meantime Archie and Adelle were not vicious, though Archie drank too much for his digestion and was often peevish in consequence, and Adelle was almost aimless and lazy enough to be described as vicious. Yet they were no worse than many, many other well-to-do young persons with no deep roots, no permanent incentives, no profound passions to give them significance. Likely enough they

might have ended in some charming English country house, or Roman palace, or pink-and-white villa along the Mediterranean, — if their fate had not been still involved with Clark's Field. They would have become perfectly respectable, utterly negligible modern citizens of the world, — the infertile by-product of a rich civilization with its perfected machinery for the preservation of accumulated wealth. There are more Archies and Adelles about us than is commonly recognized: they are on all our calling-lists, in every European capital or congregation of expensive country homes. Their names stud the "blue books" and the "red books" of conventional "society." They fill the great hotels and the mammoth steamships. They, in sum, make up a large part of that fine fruit of civilization for which the immense majority toil, and for whom serious people plan and legislate, for whom laws are interpreted and trust companies formed in order to handle the money they themselves are incapable of controlling usefully, even of safely preserving. . . .

Archie and Adelle were hungry at this period for more money and felt themselves martyrized by the whim of an ill-natured old man who had arbitrarily made them wait to be wholly happy. They talked perpetually about what they should do with themselves "after" the great event, — the sort of touring-car they should buy, the kind of establishment they should keep, the best place to live in, etc. It must be somewhere in Europe, of course, for neither was eager

to return to America "where everybody worked and there was nothing fit to eat," according to Archie. Adelle's ideas of America, never extensive, were growing dimmer every season, and the occasional friends who returned from the other shore described their native land in unflattering terms. Adelle thought that every American who could lived as much of the time as possible somewhere in Europe, but she did not think much about it at this time.

They had no children. Adelle had no objections to child-bearing and expected "sometime" to have "two or three" children. Archie thought there would be plenty of time for that "later on" when they had their money. Adelle was still very young, and in the present wandering state of their life children would be a nuisance.

Finally they were neither happy nor unhappy. Restless was the adjective that described them most closely. Their bodies and stomachs and nerves and minds and souls were always in a state of disequilibrium, and they were feeling about for equilibrium like blind kittens without forming any successful plan of extricating themselves from their subconscious state of dissatisfaction. With another order of gray matter in their brains either one might have produced out of this disequilibrium some fine, rare flower of form or color or words. But Archie's gray matter, like Adelle's, was not expressive.

Their friends thought them happy as well as fortunate. Sadie Paul reported to her sister and Eve-

line Glynn, — "Dell is crazy about her Archie — she won't let him out of her sight. He's not such a bad sort, but fearfully stuck on himself, just because Dell pets him so."

Adelle, as she frequently told Archie, infinitely preferred her choice to Sadie's "Black-and-Tan," as she called the Count Zornec.

This was their state after eighteen months of married life.

XXVII

THE trust company had left its ward severely alone since Mr. Smith's visit to Paris. Like punishing parents they seemed resolved to let Adelle taste the dregs of her folly by herself. Each quarter they deposited with the Paris bankers twelve hundred and fifty dollars and notified them not to honor Mrs. Davis's drafts in excess of this amount. It was automatic. That was the ideal of the trust company, as it is of many private persons, to reduce life to automatic processes.

But as the day drew near when the trust company had to give a final accounting to the probate court of its guardianship, they notified Adelle by a curt letter that her presence would be desirable. There were certain matters in connection with her assuming control of her fortune and terminating their trust that could be transacted more expeditiously if Mrs. Davis would present herself at their office by the end of May. "We beg to remain," etc.

The suggestion came as a welcome incentive to the young couple. Anything that might expedite matters was to their taste. They had talked of making a visit to Archie's relatives and introducing Adelle to the modern paradise of the golden slope and at the same time visiting the Pauls. And so,

about the middle of May, the Davises took ship from Havre for the New World, occupying, in deference to their coming wealth, an expensive deck suite in the transatlantic hotel, and thus made their journey in all possible comfort.

They arrived in B —— with a great many trunks that contained a small part of all those purchases which Adelle had made; also with a dog and Adelle's maid. Their first real experience of their American citizenship came naturally at the dock. Archie, who had lost some money on the way across, and was hazy about his duties and rights as a returning citizen, had put in an absurd declaration for the customs officers. With their formidable array of trunks the couple presented at once a vulnerable aspect to the inspectors, and long after the procession of travelers had scurried away in cabs, Archie and Adelle were left, hot and uncomfortable, trying to "explain" their false declaration. Adelle, who was not usually untruthful, lied shamelessly about the prices she had paid for things. "It cost just nothing at all, — twenty francs," she declared as the officer held forth some article whose real value he knew perfectly well. Adelle lost her assurance, shed tears of shame; Archie lost his temper and swore at the officer for insulting his wife, and in consequence every article in the fourteen pieces of baggage was dumped upon the dock while a grinning audience of inspectors, reporters, and stevedores gathered about the unhappy pair.

"What a country!" Archie fumed while the inspector was summoning his superior officer.

"No wonder Americans prefer to live abroad," he remarked loftily to a convenient reporter, who was preparing copy with his eager eyes.

"We won't live here, will we!" Adelle chorused to her husband.

"Not much!"

"To treat decent people like this, just because they have a few clothes and things. What do they take us for — hoboes?" Archie continued.

He forgot that he had departed from his native land a scant two years before with a lean dress-suit case and a small trunk. Also that his wife and indirectly himself were among the beneficiaries of the law they had tried to evade. The reporter, who had appraised the pair more expeditiously than the inspector had their goods, hypocritically drew them out, asking their opinion of America and Americans, which Archie set forth volubly.

When the inspectors finally came upon deposits of Adelle's jewelry which she had skillfully concealed in the toes of her shoes, they declared the game off and sent all the trunks forthwith to the stores. Their case was so serious that it must be dealt with specially. The pair finally left the dock, much chagrined, feeling as nearly like common criminals as they were ever likely to feel; indeed, somewhat frightened and much less voluble in protest, whatever their opinion of their fatherland might

still be. It was evidently a serious affair they had got themselves in for by their perfectly natural desire to save a few dollars at the expense of the Government.

The next morning when they awoke in the Eclair Hotel, which still remained B——'s best hostelry, where they had consoled themselves by taking an expensive suite and ordering a good dinner, they found that their arrival in America was not unheralded. The reporter had not been idle. His description of Archie was unkind, and his satirical report of the couple's sayings and doings was unfriendly. He had somehow discovered Adelle's connection with Clark's Field, the story of which in a much garbled form he gave to the public and incidentally doubled the size of her fortune, — "drawn from one of the most unblushing pieces of real estate promotion this State has ever seen." Altogether it was the kind of article to make the conservative gentlemen of the Washington Trust Company very unhappy. When they read it they wished again that they had never seen Adelle.

Other papers took up the scent of the "Morning Herald," and for a week Archie and Adelle were thoroughly introduced to the American people as an idle pair, of immense inherited wealth, who had failed in their attempt to defraud the custom house of a few thousand dollars. This affair kept them busy for the better part of a week, and was finally settled without prosecution when the collector

became convinced that no serious wrong had been plotted by Archie and Adelle. He gave them both a little lecture, which they received in a humbler frame of mind than they had shown at the dock.

Archie rather enjoyed the newspaper notoriety that his marriage to the heiress of Clark's Field was bringing him. He entertained the reporters affably at the hotel bar, and established a reputation for not being a "snob," though so much of a "swell." In fact he was a much less uncouth specimen than when Adelle had first encountered him in the Paris studio. A year and a half of ease and petting had served to smooth off those more obvious roughnesses that had caused Irene Paul to describe him as a "bounder." He was fashionably dressed according to the Anglo-French style, and fortunately did not affect soft shirts or flowing ties or eccentric headgear, or any other of the traditional marks of the artist. Lounging in the luxurious hotel corridor, he looked like any well-to-do young American of twenty-seven or eight. His bright red hair and small waxed mustache, and his habit of dangling a small cane, perhaps, were the only distinguishing marks about him. After the customs case had been disposed of, Archie found time hanging on his hands. Adelle was occupied with the trust company and all the formalities she had to go through with before she could actually lay her hands upon her fortune. Archie read the lighter magazines and loafed about

the streets of B ——, peering up through his glasses at the lofty buildings, and imbibing more cocktails and other varieties of American stimulants than was good for him.

XXVIII

ADELLE was distinctly roused by her return to America and all the memories awakened at the sight of familiar streets, the home of the Washington Trust Company, and the probate court whither she was obliged to go. Judge Orcutt was still sitting on the bench and seemed to her to be exactly as she remembered him, only grayer and a little more bent over his high bench. He was still that courteous, slightly distant gentleman from another age, whose mind behind the dreamy eyes seemed eternally occupied with larger matters than the administration and disposal of human property. He remembered Adelle, or professed to, and gave her a kindly old man's smile when he shook hands with her, in spite of all the *réclame* of her indecorous return to her native land. He said nothing of that, however, but refreshed his memory by consulting a little book where he entered all sorts of curious items not strictly legal that occurred to him in connection with important cases. From these pages he easily revived all the details of Adelle, her aunt, and the now famous Clark's Field.

Looking up from his book, he scrutinized with unusual interest the young woman who had come before him after an absence of seven years. He was

reflecting, perhaps, that, although she was unaware of the fact, he had played the part to her in an important crisis of a wise and beneficent Providence. In all likelihood he had preserved for her the chance of possessing the large fortune which she was about to receive with his approval from the Washington Trust Company. No wonder that he looked keenly at the young woman standing before him! What was she now? What had she done with herself these seven crucial years of her life to prepare herself for her good fortune and justify his care of her interests? How had the enjoyment of ease and the expectation of coming wealth, with all its opening of gates and widening of horizons, affected little Adelle Clark — the insignificant drudge from the Alton rooming-house? . . .

Judge Orcutt no longer published thin volumes of poetry. The bar said that he was now devoting himself more seriously to his profession. The truth was, perhaps, that in face of his accumulating knowledge of life and human beings, he no longer had the incentive to write lyrics. The poetry, however, was there ineradicably in his soul, affecting his judgments,— the lawyers still called him "cranky" or "erratic," — and giving even to routine judicial acts a significance and dignity little suspected by the careless practitioners in his court. . . . And so this elderly gentleman, for he had crossed the sixty mark by now, recalled the timid, pale-faced, undersized girl, with her "common" aunt, who seven years before had

appeared in his court and to whom he had been the instrument of giving riches. What had she done with the golden spoon he had thrust into her mouth and what would she do with it now? Ah, that was always the question with these inheritances which he was called upon to administer according to the complicated rules of law — and the law books afforded no answer to such questions! . . .

"My dear," he said, with one of his beautiful smiles that seemed to irradiate the "case" before him with its personal kindliness and sympathy, "so you have been living in Europe the last few years and are now married?"

Adelle said "yes" to both questions, while the trust officer who had accompanied her to court — not our Mr. Ashly Crane — fussed inwardly because he saw that Judge Orcutt was in one of his "wandering" and leisurely moods, and might detain them to discourse upon Europe or anything that happened into his mind before signing the necessary order. But after this introduction, the judge was silent, while his smile still lingered in the gaze he directed to the young woman before him.

Adelle, as has been amply admitted in these pages, was neither beautiful nor compelling. But she was very different indeed from the small, shabby girl of fourteen. She was taller, with a well-trained figure that showed the efforts of all the deft maids and skillful dressmakers through which it had passed. She was dressed in the very height of the prevailing

fashions — a high-water mark of eccentricity that Judge Orcutt rarely encountered in the staid circles of the good city of B——. Her skirt was slit so as to accentuate all there was of hips, and the bodice did the same for the bust. And the hat — well, even in New York its long aigrette and daring folds had caused women to look around in the streets. She carried in one hand a large bunch of mauve orchids and wore an abundance of chains and coarse, bizarre jewelry. Her face was still pale, and the gray eyes were almost as empty of expression as they had been seven years before. But altogether Adelle was *chic* and modern, as she felt with satisfaction, of a type that might find more approval in Paris than in America, where a pretty face and fresh coloring still win distinction. She was *new* all over from head to foot, of a loud, hard newness that gave the impression of impertinence, even defiance.

This was accentuated by Adelle's new manner — the one that had grown upon her ever since her elopement. Then she had taken a great step in defiance of authority, and to support her self-assertion she had put on this defiant manner, of conscious indifference to expected criticism. It was the note of her period, moreover, to flaunt independence, to push things to extremes. Needless to say that in Adelle's case it had been further emphasized by the episode with the customs officers. Here again she had defied recognized authorities and got into trouble over it; indeed, had become mildly notorious in

the newspapers. The only way she could carry off her mistake and her notoriety was, like a child, by exaggerating her nonchalance. Thus she had met President West and the other officers of the trust company. Alone — for as usual Archie had evaded the disagreeable — she had met them in their temple and felt their frigid disapprobation of her and all her ways. She had carried it off by forcing her note, "throwing it into the old boy," as she described it to Archie, with all the loud clothes, the loud manners she had at her command, and she knew that she had succeeded in making a very bad impression upon the trust company's president. She felt that she did not care — he was nothing to her.

In the same defiant mood and with the same "war-paint" she had entered Judge Orcutt's court and answered his preliminary questions. But she felt ill at ease, rather miserable under his kindly, heart-searching gaze. She wished that she had n't: she wanted to blush and drop her eyes. Instead she returned his look out of her still, gray eyes with a fascinated stare.

At last the smile faded from the judge's lips, and he withdrew his gaze from the bizarre figure before him. He asked in a brisker tone with several shades less of personal interest, —

"Your husband is with you?"

"No," she stammered uncomfortably, realizing that Archie was again evading.

He was outside lolling in the motor that they had

hired by the day, fooling with Adelle's lapdog and getting through the time as best he could. Adelle so informed the judge, who received the news with a slight frown and proceeded to the business before them. The trust officer thought that now matters would be expedited, but the judge disappointed him. After taking his pen to sign the papers, he kept his hand upon them, and clearing his throat addressed Adelle.

"Mrs. Davis," he began in formal tones, "you first came into my court seven years ago, with your aunt, at the time of your uncle's death — you remember, doubtless?"

Adelle said "yes" faintly.

"As your mother's only heir, and owing to the death of your aunt the following year who left you her sole heir, you became vested with all the known interest in certain valuable real estate that had belonged to your ancestors for many generations — what was known then as 'Clark's Field.' As you are probably aware, this property, after many years of disuse and much litigation, has finally been cleared as to title and put upon the market. It has been sold, or much of it, for large prices. For in all these years its value has very greatly increased — ten and twentyfold."

He paused for a moment, then with an unaccustomed sternness he resumed, —

"Clark's Field is no longer the pasture land of an outlying farm. In the course of all these years the

city has grown up to it and around it. Generations of men have been born, come into activity, and died, increasing in numbers all the time, demanding more and more room for homes and places of business. Thus the value of real estate has greatly risen, latterly doubling and trebling almost each year."

He stopped again, and the bored trust officer thought, "The old fellow is worse than ever to-day — getting positively dotty — likes to hear himself talk." . . .

"For thus," resumed the judge slowly, impressively, "is the nature of man, of the civilization he has created. Men must have room — land to grow upon; and that which was of little or no value becomes by the economic accidents of life of exceedingly great importance because of its necessity to the race. . . . Your forefathers, Mrs. Davis, got their own living from the farm of which this piece of land — Clark's Field — was a part; a meager living for themselves and their families they got by tilling the poor soil. They were content with taking a living out of it for themselves and their families. Indeed, if I am not mistaken, your own grandfather was anxious to sell this same field, which was all that was left to him of the ancestral farm, for a comparatively small sum of ready money — five thousand dollars."

Adelle had time to reflect that this was the exact sum on which she and Archie had tried to live for a year, with considerable inconvenience. But then

everybody said times had changed, and you could n't do now with a thousand dollars what you could once.

"Fortunately for you, Mrs. Davis," the judge was saying with a dry little smile, "your grandfather was unable to carry out his intention of disposing of Clark's Field for five thousand dollars. Nor were your mother and her brother — his children — more successful in selling their ancestral estate, although I believe they made many attempts to do so. There were legal obstructions in the way, of which doubtless you have heard. But at the very close of your uncle's life he had entered into an agreement with some real estate speculators to dispose of his equity in the property and of yours also — you being his ward — for twenty-five thousand dollars — I believe that was the sum."

Judge Orcutt put on his glasses and consulted his little book, laid the glasses down, and repeated reflectively, —

"Yes, for twenty-five thousand dollars! And he had so far carried out his intention that had he lived but a few weeks longer there would not have remained a foot of Clark's Field belonging now to any of the Clark family."

Poor uncle! Adelle thought. He was very little good in the world.

"Twenty-five thousand dollars, Mrs. Davis, is a considerable sum of money, but it is a small mess of pottage compared with what awaits you in the hands

of the Washington Trust Company. Let me see how much the estate amounts to now!"

Hereupon the trust officer handed to the judge an inventory of the estate, which the judge ran over through his glasses, muttering the items, — "Stocks, bonds, mortgages, interest in the Clark's Field Associates," etc.

At last he laid the paper aside, and looking up announced in grave tones, —

"It comes very near being five millions of dollars."

Adelle had already been told the figures by the trust company, but in the mouth of the probate judge the sum took on a new solemnity.

"Five millions of dollars," he repeated slowly. "Even in our day of large accumulations, that is a very considerable sum of money, Mrs. Davis. It is just one thousand times more than the amount your grandfather hoped to derive from the same piece of property."

The trust officer smiled, and thrusting his hands deep into his trousers' pockets gazed at the ceiling. Of course five millions was a lot of cash, but the judge seemed to forget the hour in which they were, when everyday transactions involved millions. The young woman, who had expensive tastes, would not find the income of five millions such a huge fortune to spend. She did n't look as if she would have any trouble in spending it, nor the red-headed chap she had married. Still a comfortable little fortune, all in "gilt-edge stuff." . . .

"Your estate represents an increment in value of one thousand per cent in — let me see — a little over forty-five years, less than fifty years, less than a lifetime, less than my own lifetime!"

Here the judge seemed to come to a dead stop, forgetting himself in reverie. But rousing himself suddenly he asked Adelle, —

"Have you ever seen Clark's Field?"

Adelle thought she remembered being taken there as a young girl by her aunt.

"I mean have you been there recently, since it has been subdivided and brought into human use?"

No, she had not been in Alton since her return to America, in fact not for seven years.

"Then, Mrs. Davis," the judge said very earnestly, almost sternly, "I most strongly advise you to go there at once and see what has happened to your grandfather's old pasture. Look at the source of your wealth! It must interest you deeply, I should think! The changes that you will find in Clark's Field are very great, the spiritual changes even greater than the physical ones, perhaps. Go to Clark's Field, by all means, before you leave the city. Go at once! And take your husband with you. . . . And now, Mr. Niver," he said to the astonished trust officer, "if you have all the papers — yes, I have examined the inventory of the estate sufficiently. Mr. Smith brought it to me some time ago." . . .

There followed certain legal exchanges between

the court and the trust officer, while Adelle thought over what the judge had said to her about Clark's Field and felt rather queer, uncomfortably so, as if the probate judge had distilled a subtle medicine in her cup of joy, or had clouded the clear horizon of her young life with a mysterious veil of unintelligible considerations. Yet he seemed to be, as she had always thought him, a good old man, and wise. And he was making no trouble about giving her and Archie the money they so much wanted to have. Even now he was writing his signature with the old-fashioned steel pen he used, a clear, beautiful signature, upon several documents. As he finished the last one, he glanced up at her and with another of his fine smiles, as if he wished to reassure her after his little sermon, said to Adelle, —

"Now, Mrs. Davis, it is yours, — your own property, to do with as you will. You are no longer a ward of my court!"

He rose from his judge's chair and took her hand, which he held a trifle longer than necessary, smiling down upon the woman-girl, his lips apparently forming themselves for another little speech, but he did not utter it. Instead, he dropped Adelle's hand and with a nod of dismissal turned into his chambers. So Adelle left the probate court, as she thought for the last time, wondering what the judge wanted to say to her, but had refrained from speaking.

It would be interesting to know, also, what were the entries that Judge Orcutt made in his little note-

book upon this, his final official act in the Clark's Field drama. But that we have no means of discovering. All legal requirements had been duly fulfilled, and everything else must remain within the judge's breast for his own spiritual nourishment — and for Adelle's if she could divine what he meant.

XXIX

WHEN Adelle reached the street she found Archie lolling in the car, across the way, in the shade of a tall building. At her appearance he yawned and stretched his cramped legs.

"It took you an awful time," he grumbled to his wife. "What was the trouble?"

"Nothing," Adelle replied.

As she got into the car she gave the driver an order, — "Go out to Alton."

"Where's that?" Archie inquired.

"A little way out — across the river," Adelle informed him.

"What do you want to go there for — it's nearly lunch-time," Archie demurred.

"I'm going out to see Clark's Field," Adelle replied succinctly.

Archie knew vaguely that the Field had something to do with his wife's fortune, but understood that it had been mostly "cashed in" as he would phrase it.

"What's your hurry?" Archie objected. "We can go out there some other time just as well."

But for once Archie was compelled to bend to a superior purpose and endure being bumped over the rough pavements of the city out to the old South Road, which was still cut up badly by heavy team-

ing as it had been in the days of the farmers' market carts, and which also swarmed with huge trolley boxes and motor trucks and pedestrians. For Alton was now merely a lively industrial quarter of the "greater" city. In addition to the old stove-works of enduring fame there were also foundries and factories and mills. The old, leisurely "Square" had become a knot of squalid arteries radiating into this human hive. Life teemed all over, swarmed upon the pavements, hung from the high tenement windows, infested the strange delicatessen and drink shops, many of which bore foreign names. Most marvelous fact of all was that the thin, pale American type, of which Adelle herself was an example, had largely disappeared from the Alton streets, and in its place there were members from pretty nearly all the races of the earth, — Greeks, Poles, Slavs, Persians, — especially Italians. Many a sturdy young woman, with bare brown arms and glossy black hair, strode along, hatless and unashamed, on her way to shop or mill through the streets where Addie Clark had sidled with prim consciousness of her "place" in society. Archie remarked the growing cosmopolitanism of his native land with strong expressions of disapproval.

"It looks like a slum," he grumbled. "And nothing but dagoes in it. What a place! — and what scum!" he commented frankly upon his wife's birthplace. "Was it like this when you lived here?" he asked pityingly.

"Not so much," she said quietly, not knowing why she disliked his tone and his comment upon the present population of Alton.

"They ought to do something to prevent all this foreign trash from swarming over here," Archie observed.

He did not reflect, nor did Adelle, that this "foreign scum" had come to replace his race because he and his kind refused any longer to do the hard labor of the world. If he had been of a more serious turn of mind, he would have joined the anti-Immigration League and raised the patriotic slogan of "America for Americans!"

Adelle made no reply to his remarks. She sat silent in her corner of the car, glancing intently at the old scenes that were so new and unexpected. From time to time she directed the chauffeur when he was in doubt, the old turnings of the streets coming back to her with astonishing sureness. At last, at Shepard Street, she told him to turn off the South Road, and at once they were in the maze of brick and mortar that had been Clark's Field, — the old Clark pasture. The bulky car had to move slowly through the narrow streets, much to the driver's impatience, and he had frequently to toot his horn or screech his raucous Claxton to warn the pedestrians to make way for the visitors. The children crawled off the streets with the instinctive unconcern of familiarity with traffic; the bareheaded women and dark-faced men scowlingly gave the chariot of the

rich space to proceed. So they threaded the lanes and the cross-streets that ribbed the old Field, crossing it twice and completely circling it once, until Archie was in a state of vocal rebellion at the stench, the squalor, the ugliness of the place.

But Adelle looked and looked with unwonted curiosity. In her European wanderings she had penetrated by necessity or accident similar industrial neighborhoods, where human beings swarmed and life was ugly, only to escape as soon as possible. But this time she did not wish to hurry. Clark's Field seemed different to her from anything else she had ever seen.

It was all new, and yet in the way of slums it was immemorially ancient at the same time, as if the members of old races that had come to fill it had brought with them all the grime, all the dreariness of generations of bitter living. And it was this, rather than the marvelous transformation of the sandy field which Adelle dimly remembered, that seized hold of her. How could people live so thickly together, swarm like flies in so many identical doorways, get along with so little air or sunshine or freedom of movement!

"Packed like rotting sardines," was Archie's sneering comment.

Artificially packed, too, scientifically packed in an up-to-date manner, and all in the space of a few years! Modern magic they said of things like this, and took a strange blind pride in it. Even Archie

observed with curiosity, — "They must have been a busy little bunch that got this up so quickly!"

Indeed, the Washington Trust Company, under the thin disguise of the Clark's Field Associates, had shown great shrewdness and ingenuity in "developing" the fifty-acre tract so that the greatest possible sum could be extracted from its lean soil. They had resisted all temptations to open it as "a residential section" of the growing city. They knew that Alton was condemned to the coarser uses of society and must be an industrial slum. So they had sold a small portion in one corner to a steel foundry — one of the subsidiaries of a great corporation. And then they developed the remainder for the use of the operatives gathered together from all parts of the earth. The choicest lots they reserved for "future growth." Along the broad South Road they built substantial brick buildings for stores and offices. In the nest of by-streets that ribbed the tract they erected lofty tenement warrens, as closely packed as the law allows, — not the lowest order of tenement, to be sure, because in the long run such buildings do not make a good investment; but a slightly higher class of brick, bathroomed, three- and four-room tenements, from the rear of which flowed out long streamers of clothes drying in the wind. For the most part Clark's Field had thus received its "development." That which had agitated a number of generations of Alton citizens had been accomplished. For a considerable term of years Clark's Field would

not change in character unless a disturbance of unexpected magnitude should wipe clean the ground for men to plan anew.

As I have said, Clark's Field was now an industrial slum, but its character was not as bad as much else in the cities of men. There are far worse places in London or New York or Chicago — even in such smaller cities as Pittsburg and Liverpool — for filth, crowding, and gloom. Age added to cheapness increases misery and squalor, and Clark's Field was still an infant. Indeed, the promoters of Clark's Field were proud of their achievement and advertised it as the last and most enlightened example of wholesale, industrial housing. But as Archie felt about it, the place was worse really than the more celebrated slums of older cities in its pretentious cheapness, its dreary monotony and colorlessness, its very respectability and smug tediousness. A life dropped into its maze and growing up in it must be lost for good and all — must become just another human ant crawling over Clark's Field, with the habits and coloring of all the other human ants striving there for life and happiness. Archie, perhaps, felt this cramped and deadening atmosphere more keenly than Adelle, and he prided himself on his greater sensitiveness. He thanked God that he had come from the broad sunny vineyards of the Golden State, where life still touches the arcadian age, — not from *this*, as his wife had! His two years of foreign rambling had educated him into a prideful

sense of American vulgarity and hideousness of detail.

Adelle seemed wholly absorbed in the bricks and mortar laid upon old Clark's Field. She did not speak. It would be impossible to say what she was thinking of. . . . At last, as they emerged from another long stretch of narrow street bordered on either side by high tenements that were varied according to a machine pattern by different colored bricks, Archie protested. He growled,—"Well, haven't you seen enough of this sort of thing to last you awhile?"

Adelle gave the order to retrace their journey to the hotel. She looked back into the dreary maze with her wide gray eyes, and now they were not quite empty eyes as they had been in the probate courtroom. She looked and looked as if she were seeing the past as well as the present, as if she were trying to fathom what Judge Orcutt had meant. When the Field faded into the distance behind the rapid car, she sank back into her corner with an unconscious sigh. Archie had taken a cigarette from the little gold case that had been one of Adelle's first presents to him, and as he lighted it skillfully in face of the wind was doubtless thinking that never again would he be misled into going to Clark's Field.

On the way back Adelle ordered the driver to stop in the Square, and despite Archie's protest that it was already long past lunch-time she left him in the car and turned down the side street that led to the old rooming-house. It was gone! In its place was a

five-story flat building that occupied not only all their yard, but the livery-stable lot as well. Adelle realized the change with a positive shock. Latterly, since the little lecture by the probate judge, the images of her early life had come back to her mind as they had not for years. The transformation of Clark's Field did not matter so much even: it had not been in the immediate horizon of her youth, — more an idea than a physical possession. But Church Street and the rooming-house and the livery-stable — they had been her very self. She felt strangely as she had seven years before when she was returning to her aunt's house after the funeral of the widow. The last of all her landmarks had been swept away. . . .

She returned to the car with a thoughtful face, and all the way into the city she paid no attention to Archie's chatter, her mind far away, busy with her forlorn little past. Once or twice she wondered what the judge had meant by urging her to take her husband to see Clark's Field. But she was glad that she had gone. She should have visited Alton sometime or other she supposed to see what the old place was like; — she must remember to go to the cemetery before they left B—— and look for her aunt's grave. But this was not all that the judge meant, Adelle suspected.

She was not to discover for some years the full, fine meaning of the judge's intention, perhaps might never recognize all the implications of his message to her on her twenty-first birthday.

XXX

ARCHIE was pacified by a copious luncheon in the Eclair restaurant, which is almost as good as a second-class Paris restaurant, and after an idle afternoon the couple went to a popular musical comedy to end their day. Adelle's business with the trust company was now finished, and they must decide upon their next move. Their first impulse after the rout upon the dock had been to dart back to Europe as expeditiously as possible, with Adelle's recovered lamp, and never darken again their native shores. But this pettish mood had been largely forgotten during the fortnight that ensued, and they remembered their plan of going to California so that Archie might present himself in his new estate and his wife to his own people. A cable from Sadie Paul, stating that she had taken "the B. and T." (which being properly interpreted meant that she had decided to marry her Hungarian count) and was returning to her home to celebrate her wedding, determined them. They forthwith made their arrangements to cross the continent and spend the summer on the Pacific Coast.

It may as well be said that before departing Adelle had one quite serious business talk with President West of the trust company and the excellent Mr.

Smith, whose had been the chastening hand at the time of her elopement. Possibly the wisdom of his remarks was becoming more evident to Adelle as marriage wore on, or it might be that she still did usually as she was told, if she were told with sufficient authority. At any rate, she agreed to leave in the hands of the Washington Trust Company the bulk of her estate, not strictly in the form of a trust, — they could not induce her to surrender the privilege of the lamp to that extent, — but under an agreement by which she bound herself not to disturb the principal of her fortune for a term of years. The bankers represented to her tactfully that neither she nor Mr. Davis had yet had extensive experience in the investment of money; that the operations of the Clark's Field Associates were not finally wound up; that they had had such success in their investments on her account that it would be well to allow them to carry out their scheme of investment, etc. In short, she signed the agreement, which was the last thing she did in B——.

Archie, when he learned what she had done, was irritated. Naturally he did not like Mr. Smith and had a grudge against the trust company as a whole. He said that the arrangement reflected upon him and his dignity as a husband, although, as Mr. West had pointed out to Adelle, it was not customary for a husband to be entrusted with the disposal of all his wife's property. Since the vogue of international marriages, American fathers had taken refuge

in the trust companies. In spite of argument and sulks, however, Archie could not prevail upon Adelle to undo what she had done, and he had to content himself with the shrewd reflection that it was probably not legally binding and could be broken when opportunity offered.

In this affair Adelle displayed an unexpected caution by her willingness to let the trust company remain guardian of her magic lamp for the present. She had a woman's instinctive confidence in an institution, especially in one which years of use had made familiar to her. Archie, she felt justly, must content himself with their income, which would be more than two hundred thousand a year. That should satisfy their immediate wants after the eighteen months of bread-and-butter probation. And after all it was her own money, as the trust officers had said to her again and again. This, however, she did not repeat to Archie. She soothed his irritated pride in other ways, and in the end a fairly contented and harmonious couple were whirled westward in the track of the setting sun to that more golden shore of our continent, where other fate awaited them.

XXXI

AFTER a brief visit at the Santa Rosa vineyard, where oddly enough Adelle seemed to feel more at home than Archie, they went to Bellevue to attend the famous Paul wedding. Here Irene Paul, now an "Honorable Mrs." George Pointer, entertained them, both Adelle and Irene apparently forgetting their old grudges. Arm about waist they went lovingly up the grand staircase of the old Paul mansion to Adelle's rooms, babbling about school days, Pussy Comstock, and the other girls of her famous "family." Irene even looked with favor upon Archie in his developed condition of a rich woman's husband. Adelle reflected complacently that he was quite as presentable as a man as the young Englishman Irene had married. All you had to do to succeed, in marriage as in other things, was to do what you wanted and make the world accept you and your acts. And she honestly admired the tall blonde Irene, who had bloomed under the influences of matrimony into something suggestively English — high-colored, stately, emphatic. She liked the rambling ugly mansion built in the eighties after Hermann Paul's success with railroads, in the best mansard style of the day, and never touched since. The grounds which had been extensively planted by the

railroad man were now covered with a luxuriant growth of exotic trees that completely hid the house and afforded only peeps of the distant bay. California, with its pungent stimulants of odor and color, appealed to her from the very first. She was quite happy, and Archie seemed to expand in his native soil and was less peevish than he had grown to be latterly.

After the wedding, which according to the local newspapers was a very grand affair, but which unfortunately does not come into this story, Archie and Adelle prolonged their visit. They found the easy atmosphere of this pretty California town so agreeable, with its busy air of luxurious leisure, that they took a furnished house for the remainder of the season, and in the autumn they rented a larger place out on the hills behind the town, having a lovely view of the great valley and the distant waters of the Bay, with the blue tips of the inland hills rising through the mists. They still talked confidently of returning to Europe to live.

They did not, however, at least for permanent residence. Archie was too content with life in this land of sunshine, flowers, and informal living, to leave. He said quite flatly now that he did not think he was meant to be a painter and there was no point in being an artist if you did not have to be something. Adelle perceived that according to Archie there was not much point in doing anything unless one had to. She began to suspect dimly the existence of a deep hu-

man law. "By the sweat of thy brow," it had been writ in that Puritan Bible she studied at the First Congregational Church in Alton. Then it had a very definite meaning even to her child's mind, but during the easy years since, she had forgotten it altogether. Now something like its stern truth was boring into her consciousness. It seemed that when the larger incentives of living — the big universal ones — had been removed for any cause, human beings were often at a loss what to do with themselves. They sighed for "freedom" when bound to the common wheel, but when released, as Archie and Adelle had been, the average man or woman had but the feeblest notion of what to do with his "freedom."

With women such as Adelle the tragedy is less apparent than with men, because woman's life for uncounted ages has consisted in great part of playing games with herself at the dictates of men, and large wealth assists her in making these games socially interesting and agreeable. Adelle, to be sure, had no social ambition of the conventional sort. She was more content than Archie with merely being married and having plenty of money to spend in any way she chose. In this respect she was nearer the primitive than Archie, who often reminded her of the fact somewhat cruelly. Yet, as we shall see, when the time came she awoke to the full realization of the situation, which Archie never understood at all.

Art having finally been thrown out of the window by both, it remained to determine how best they

could dispose of themselves and their riches so as to "get the most out of life." The first of the game substitutes for real living happened to be a "ranch." The suggestion came from Irene's husband, who had been attracted to California by this lure of "ranching."

"Why don't you go in for a big ranch?" he said to Archie one evening, when the four were yawning sleepily over the fire after a day spent motoring in the wind. "There's the Arivista property in Sonoma County. I hear they want to sell — ten thousand acres."

The idea of becoming a large landowner appealed to the Californian in Archie. They talked the matter over, and it resulted in their all motoring down the State to the Arivista property. In the end they bought at considerable expense this ten-thousand-acre tract of mountain, valley, and plain, and began elaborate improvements. It had been once a "cattle proposition," but Archie's idea was to turn it into fruit and nuts, as well as a gentleman's estate of a princely sort, with a large "mission style" cement mansion. He engaged an architect and a superintendent, and began building and planting on an elaborate scale.

Adelle was glad to see her Archie really interested in something and encouraged him in all his ambitious plans. They motored frequently to the ranch to inspect operations. It took them two days to go and return, and there were only rough accommoda-

tions at the ranch. But she liked it. The great untamed spaces of hill and plain, with the broad horizon of blue mountains, appealed to her. She was less interested in the big house, the barns, outbuildings, orchards, — all the paraphernalia that goes with an "estate," which Archie wished impatiently to have created at once. It took, naturally, a great deal of money. Before the work at Arivista was finally stopped, it was estimated that close to half a million dollars of Clark's Field had been poured into this California "ranch," from which, of course, less than a quarter was ever recovered, no other rich man being found with similar conceptions of what a "ranch" should be. All told, the Davises lived upon their ranch less than four months during the next spring, and before the blossoms had finally fallen sufficient reasons were found to move them back nearer people and the ordinary diversions of life. Water, it was discovered, could not be got in sufficient quantity. The relaxing climate of the south did not seem to agree with Adelle. And, above all, a child was expected.

The little boy was born in Bellevue. He had come to them by accident, for neither felt that it was yet the right time to have children; but Adelle recognized almost at once that it was likely to be a happy accident for her and welcomed it with all proper fervor. It served, at any rate, to settle them in California for the present. They decided to buy the place they had rented upon the hills and live there for

most of the year. And it also served to strengthen the bond between husband and wife, which was wearing dangerously thin in places. With the coming of the child the family was constituted, and another interest was given to Adelle, which compensated for Archie's pettish moods. The child also released Archie from the constant attention which Adelle exacted of him, and permitted him more of that precious "freedom," which he found wealth did not always bring.

Thus they definitely started their California life.

XXXII

BELLEVUE is one of those country towns in the neighborhood of a large city that have flourished especially since the discovery of the motor-car. It took quite two hours to reach it from San Francisco by train and nearly that by fast driving in a car, owing to the poor roads. Thus it was removed for the present from the contaminating contact of the "commuter" and all the commonness of suburbanism. Bellevue had, of course, its country club, with a charming new clubhouse, where polo was played in season, as well as the humbler forms of sport such as golf and tennis, and where a good deal of lively entertaining went on at all seasons. It was an old settlement; that is, it had been the country home of a few families for almost two generations, the first of the great places having been developed in the seventies when the railroad fortunes were being made. Besides these older estates, which were marked by the luxuriance of their planting and by the ugliness of their houses, there was a growing number of smaller, more modern estates with attractive houses, and also a little settlement "across the tracks" of tradespeople and servants. Except for the eternal spring and the wealth of California foliage, Bellevue was much like any number of towns outside of Chicago,

Philadelphia, New York, or Boston. And the social life of the place, except for the minor modifications due to climate and environment, was so exactly typical of what everybody knows that it needs no description.

Thanks to Irene's good will as well as to Adelle's fortune the Davises became immediately acquainted with the "colony" of Bellevue, and were easily accepted as members of that supposedly exclusive society. Archie rapidly made a place for himself at the club. Having no regular occupation he could devote himself to polo with the exclusiveness of a single passion. For diversion he motored up to the city frequently, where he became a member of several clubs, and for business there was always the ranch to worry about. In this way he kept up a current of movement in his daily life, which for persons like the Davises takes the place of real activity.

Adelle was indolent about social life as about much else. She did not like to take pains over anything and found entertaining a bore. She was a poor diner-out, and when the coming of her child gave her an excuse she was quite content to leave the social aspect of their life to Archie, who was generally thought to be much more agreeable than his wife. After they finally decided to buy the Bellevue place, Adelle occupied herself with ambitious schemes for the improvement of the property. She decided that the old house was uncomfortable and badly placed, too near the road, and selected a site upon the steep

hillside, which commanded a large view of the valley and the great Bay across the verdurous growth of the town. Then she engaged a young architect, who was a member of the Bellevue Country Club and had "done" several houses in the neighborhood, and at once she was involved in a bewildering maze of plans for house and grounds. This kept her busy during her convalescence and gratified the rudimentary creative instinct in her, which had led her before to making jewelry. In planning a large country estate there was also a pleasant sense of rivalry with her old friend Irene, who was forced to content herself for the present with her father's out-of-date mansion. It took much money, of course, and the young architect spared his clients no possible expense, but Adelle felt that the springs of Clark's Field were inexhaustible.

It was, perhaps, the happiest period of Adelle's existence. Her marriage had begun to prove uncomfortable in Europe and threatened badly at Arivista, because there was not enough of anything between her and her husband to support idleness alone. It was much better at Bellevue, for here Archie was taken care of, not always in a safe way, but, as far as Adelle knew, satisfactorily. The rich, sensuous country, with its peculiar profusion of exotic vegetation and the luxury of perpetual good weather, made Adelle, pale offspring of an outworn Puritanism, bloom, especially after the birth of her child. It was as if all the desires of the old Clarks

to escape the hardships of their bleak lives found at last their fulfillment in her. She expanded under the influence of warmth and color; for climate is a larger moral factor than is usually recognized. In California the struggle for life is a meaningless figure of speech, and Adelle did not like struggling. She loved to putter about in the overgrown garden and to slumber in the sun beside her little boy, refusing to descend to the delights of the club and Bellevue hospitality even after she had no excuse. When Irene took her to task for her dawdling by herself she gurgled contentedly, —

"What's the good of doing those things? Archie likes it — he sees the crowd at the club — that's enough for him."

"You've got to take your position, "Irene remonstrated with a new pose. She herself aspired to lead on the score of her family's antiquity in Bellevue.

"What's that?" Adelle asked blankly.

It was difficult as Irene found to explain just what position Adelle Davis should take in human society, just what it meant to be a "leader." But she talked much about "the world going by one," and "duties of our position," and "keeping in touch," with a note of mature tolerance and responsibility in her voice. To all of which Adelle opposed merely a lazy stare. In her gray eyes she seemed to mirror the fussy little social life of this ideal country town, with its spread of motors about the station on the arrival of the afternoon train from the city, its prop-

under those terms. . . . In the end she went up softly to her baby's room and spent a long time in examining minutely the child's features. Now that she had discovered all the delights of maternity she wondered at herself for having been so indifferent to this great power latent in her of creating life, and determined to have other children as soon as possible. As a matter of course she thought of Archie as their father, but it was only in that way that she thought of him at all, if she did happen to think of him. A husband was the necessary means of fulfilling her new desire to have her own young.

XXXIII

THAT summer while the new house was going up they went back to Europe for a few months, as it was too hot on the ranch and they had nothing better to do. They also meant to buy furniture, rugs, pictures, and other material for the new home which they expected would be their permanent abiding-place. . . .

It would be a waste of time to chronicle in minute detail this period of Adelle's marriage. As the reader must suspect by this time, nothing of spiritual significance was to come to Adelle through Archie nor to Archie through Adelle. They did continue for a number of years to be man and wife, although they frequently had bitter quarrels and felt rather than clearly recognized that their union had been a mistake, which neither one seemed able to rectify nor make the best of. It was not so much principle that prolonged their tie, nor design on Archie's part to keep possession of the wealth his wife had brought him, as the fact of the child — and Adelle's hope, which was never realized, of having other children.

One of their more serious quarrels was occasioned by Adelle's discovery at this time of Archie's unfortunate speculations. She had already yielded to his constant demands for money for the ranch and broken her arrangement with the Washington Trust

Company, converting part of their excellent investments into cash, which she removed to San Francisco, where it could be got at more easily. Archie had had charge of this uninvested portion of the estate; it gave him something to do and to talk about with men. Until her illness, to be sure, Adelle had kept run of what was being done with her money, and opposed any considerable further changes in the investments of the estate, which were of the sort that a good trust company would make, and which had very greatly appreciated in value during these last years of national prosperity. But during her illness and afterwards when she was absorbed in the child, Archie had taken a freer hand and had changed some of the investments unknown to his wife. He had put the money into local enterprises, of which the men he met told him, but about which he could know very little. There were new water-power companies up in the mountains, and there was especially the Seaboard Railroad and Development Company — a daring scheme for opening up a tract of land along the northern coast of California. Into this last venture Archie had put much more of Adelle's money than he liked to remember. It was a pet project of the men he knew best in the Bellevue Club — the polo-playing set. The Honorable George Pointer was very active in Seaboard, representing an English syndicate that was supposed to be backing the enterprise with ample funds, and for this reason the Pointers had pro-

longed their California sojourn beyond the usual term. Seaboard, it was said, would prove eventually to be much more important than a short line of new railroad developing a desolate stretch of the Pacific: it was to be used as a club upon one of the older railroads. The best families of the State were heavily interested in it, the younger generation of bloods expecting by means of it to rival the railroading exploits of their fathers, whose fortunes, as everybody knows, were acquired in the golden seventies and eighties in much the same way. (And when the explosion in Seaboard came off, it left deep scars all through California society.)

All this Archie tried to make Adelle understand, when unexpectedly she gained a knowledge of his operations in Seaboard. She happened to open some letters from his brokers that came to Archie during his absence — letters that clamored for more ready money with which to pay for options that Archie had taken upon the common stock of the new company. Adelle was disturbed when she discovered that more than a million of her money had already gone into Seaboard. The couple had some sharp words about the matter, in which Adelle put the thing rather too bluntly to Archie, —

"What do you know about railroads? You are n't a business man — you never earned a dollar in business in your life!"

Adelle was probably remembering how she had given Archie the only order he had ever received for

his painting. Archie naturally resented her allusion to his penniless and dependent state. He knew, he asserted, quite as much as other men, whom he instanced, all of whom managed their wives' money affairs without being scolded for what they did.

But why, Adelle urged more softly, did he have to speculate—try to make more money than they already had? And Archie's somewhat incoherent reply was much the same as Irene Pointer's reasons for going into the society of one's fellows. To try to make more money when one already had the use of a great deal was an honorable and sensible ambition — every one would tell her so. All moneyed men who were worth their salt were always alive to opportunities of enlarging their possessions. Did she want her husband to sit around with folded hands and do nothing in the world? Archie waxed righteous and right-minded, which is the easiest way to eloquence.

Adelle was silent, though not convinced by his reasoning any more than she had been by Irene's about "taking her part." Both seemed to make life needlessly dangerous and complicated, under the disguise of duty. But she could not endure sullenness and bad temper in Archie. Having taken the sort of husband she had, she must make the best of life with him, even if he hazarded her fortune in doubtful enterprises. She remembered with comfort that there was a great deal of money, and ultimately would be even more when Clark's Field was finally

liquidated. Archie could hardly go so wrong in investments as to make away with all of it. So she agreed to his selling another block of General Electric or Bell Telephone and taking up his options, and having thus made up their difference, they drifted on their way.

They motored across the continent to the remote fastness where the Countess Zornec was housed upon her husband's estate and spent some weeks with the couple. It was easy, even for Adelle's unobservant eyes, to detect signs of trouble in this new marriage. Sadie had a temper. All the girls at the Hall had known that. Indeed, she had the characteristics of her mother, who report said had been an Irish girl in one of the U. P. construction camps when old Paul found her — that was long before his fortune came, when he was a simple contractor for the railroad. Sadie had an unfortunate mouth, with coarse teeth, and when she was crossed, this long mouth wrinkled into a snarl. The Count apparently had already found out how to cross her. Indeed, he did not disguise his contempt for his bride's origins, and sometimes decorum was badly strained at the dinner-table. Sadie was little and lithe and was something of the *gamine* — her "tricks," as the girls called her daring maneuvers, had always pleased men. But the Count did not like "tricks." He wished more dignity in the wife of a Zornec and did not hesitate to tell Sadie so. Nor did he care to have her *gaminerie* attract other men. In short, as Sadie

confided to Adelle in a burst shortly after her arrival, the Count was a "regular brute." It seemed that Europeans made very good lovers, but dangerous husbands. Adelle was to be congratulated for having married an American, "who at least knew how to treat a woman," as if she were more than his horse or his servant. Adelle might once have been pleased by this admission of envy of her Archie; but now she had her own troubles. However, she did not confess them to any one. She said good-naturedly that it was hard being married to most any man, until you got used to it. Sadie shook her small head and showed her large teeth.

"I'll show him," she said, "that he can't wipe his feet on me! An American woman won't stand what he's used to."

Adelle suspected dire things, physical violence even, and was silent.

Sadie continued, — "Some day he'll go too far, and then —" She closed her lips over the teeth in a hard fashion.

Adelle wondered what she would do with the Count in such an event. She could hardly divorce him, for the Pauls were Catholic as well as the Zornecs, of course. It was very inconvenient being a Catholic, she reflected, if you were to be married. And it seemed less easy to drop a husband in Europe than it was in America. There would be trouble about the children and all that.

Archie did not find the Count so bad, although he

growled sometimes at his host's thinly veiled contempt for all Americans. Archie felt superior to the foreign nobleman who had made a rich American marriage. At least he had taken an heiress from his own people, and there was distinction in that. But the Count and Archie hunted and rode together, also drank deeply of the Hungarian wines and excellent French champagne that the castle contained. He was of the opinion that Sadie Paul had got "what she deserved."

"She needed a man to throw her around a bit — she was always too fresh," he told Adelle.

Archie believed in the strong hand with women. Adelle wondered whether Archie would ever attempt to use it upon her and what she would do under such circumstances. She was sure that she would resent it dreadfully. That would seem too much for any woman to bear — to marry a poor man and support him quite handsomely in idleness and then be abused by him. But fortunately it had not got to that point in their marriage — nothing worse than sullenness and silence or angry words had happened thus far.

The Davises terminated their visit sooner than had been expected. The little boy's ill health was made the excuse, but the fact was that the tempestuous atmosphere of the Zornec household was far from pleasant to easy-going people. They engaged the couple for a return visit the next spring in California and motored off to Paris. The Zornecs had

been a good object lesson to them, and for the rest of their trip they remained good friends, being almost lover-like in their respect for each other. They seemed to feel the dangers ahead and restrained their moods. Finally, gathering together their plunder they sailed home, and this time did not make any attempt to evade the custom-house ordeal. They paid nobly for the privilege of being American citizens and did not demur. Adelle insisted upon that, remembering their former experience. Archie was in such haste to get back to California where "Seaboard was acting queer" that he would have paid double for the privilege of entering his own country. They sped swiftly across the continent to their new home.

XXXIV

THE house was far from finished by the end of September when they arrived. Their idea of what it should be had developed so fast under the stimulus of the young architect that they could not recognize the original conception in the imposing structure that awaited them. It was meant to be an adaptation of a Spanish villa, in two wings, with a long elevation upon the ravine connecting the two. There was also to be a complicated set of terraces and forecourt, formal gardens, pool, and orangery, which required an immense amount of masonry work that had scarce been begun. Nevertheless they attempted to install themselves in spite of the fact that the workmen were cluttered all over the place, and moved into the wing that was most nearly completed, husband and wife occupying a ground floor suite that was meant for bachelor guests, the child and its nurse being housed temporarily upstairs in the main house. Adelle did not like this separation from the child, but there seemed nothing else to do for the present.

That autumn and winter they lived at close quarters with an army of workmen, who, having three masters, — Adelle, Archie, and the architect, — took advantage of the resulting confusion to move as

slowly as possible. Adelle was not impatient as Archie had been with the ranch. She liked directing the work, and discovered that she had her own ideas, which necessitated extensive changes. She spent almost all her time on the place, while Archie was often away for days at a time in the city, attending to business or amusing himself. Adelle scarcely noticed his absences. With her little boy and the house she had her hands quite full, and it was easier to do things when Archie was not there to interfere.

Theirs was a rare location, even in this lovely land, as all their neighbors said. Behind the house the land rose rapidly to a steep ridge of hill that divided the valley from the coast valleys, and thus protected them with its crown of tall eucalyptus trees from the raw sea winds. Their hillside had been thickly planted to cedars and eucalyptus, and the house looked out from its niche in the hill upon the fertile valley in which Bellevue lies, dotted with rich country estates and fruit orchards. Farther east shimmered the waters of the Bay, and on clear days the blue tops of the Santa Clara mountains melted into the clouds beyond the Bay. Immediately beneath the house was the cañon, through which in the rainy season a stream of water gushed melodiously. The steep sides of this cañon were covered with a growth of aromatic plants and shrubs, the pale blues of the wild lilac touching it here and there. Like a bit of real California, "Highcourt," as they had called the place, was a perpetual bower of bloom and fragrance

and sunshine, with a broad panorama of valley, sea, and mountain to gaze upon. Adelle loved to wander about her new possession, exploring its every corner, and when she was tired she could come back to the sunny forecourt and supervise the workmen, making petty decisions, summoning the foreman and the architect for consultation. She thus planned so many alterations which entailed delays that Archie grumbled that they would never get to rights and be able to have people to dinner. Adelle did not seem to care. She had not profited by Irene's advice, and made no effort to create a social atmosphere. Irene apparently gave her up as a hopeless case, and rarely came up the long driveway to Highcourt. The Pointers were still anchored in California, thanks to Seaboard and the darkening financial horizon, and Irene was improving her time by "living hard," which was her philosophy. Adelle knew that she and Archie saw much of each other, were very good friends, indeed, but the intimacy did not disturb her. She no longer had that passionate jealousy of Archie's every movement which had rendered the first years of their marriage so irksome to Archie. It is doubtful if she would have resented his intimacy with any woman, but his "affair" with Irene Pointer merely amused her. Archie was no longer her most precious possession. . . .

The winter after their return to California a new specter appeared — the last that Adelle expected to encounter in her life. Archie hinted that it would

be well to go slow with their "improvements" at Highcourt. The times were getting bad, he said, and the market looked as if they would get worse rather than better. Every one was talking of a dark future, unsettled conditions industrially in the country, and "tightening money," whatever that might mean. Adelle could not see why it should affect her solid fortune based upon Clark's Field. To be sure, men talked business more than usually, the ill treatment that capital was receiving, the "social unrest," and such matters, which did not interest her. She thought that Archie had caught the trick of complaining about business and cursing social conditions in America from the men at his clubs, most of whom were obliged to earn their living by business. If the worst came, if America became impossible, as Nelson Carhart was always predicting, for "decent people to endure," they could go abroad until things straightened out again.

Then in midwinter came the Seaboard smash. As a matter of fact, that crazy enterprise had been tottering upon the brink of failure from its inception, and Archie was merely one of the stool pigeons on whom the shrewd promoters had unloaded their "underwriting" in approved style. He came back from San Francisco one night very glum and announced peremptorily that they must cut down their expenses and "quit all this fool building." He wanted to sell the ranch, but it could not be sold in these depressed times when rich men were hoarding their

pennies like paupers. And there began at Highcourt a régime of retrenchment, bitterly fought by Adelle — the rich man's poverty where there is no actual want, but a series of petty curtailments and borrowings and sometimes a real shortness of cash, almost as squalid as the commoner sort of poverty. Adelle could not understand the reason for this sudden change, and refused absolutely to stop all work upon Highcourt and go abroad again for the sake of economy. Why should she be made uncomfortable, just because Archie had been foolish about investments and felt hard up? So they had some words, and Archie went oftener than ever to San Francisco, frequently staying in the city for days at a time, which was bad for Adelle's fortune, had she but realized it. But, as has been shown, she had come now to the time when she felt relieved if Archie was not at home, glum and sulky, or nagging and fighting her will. With the place and her boy she had enough to fill her mind, and easily forgot all money troubles when Archie was not there to remind her of them. Somehow they raised the money for the workmen, and the building went on, more slowly.

XXXV

THE workmen at Highcourt were of the nondescript labor army that America has recruited. For the rougher outside work there were a number of Italians, whom Adelle liked to entertain with her tourist Italian. There were also a few Greeks and Slavs who had got into this kind of work from other occupations. Inside the house the carpenters, painters, and plumbers were Swedes, Finns, Germans, one Englishman — no one who might justly be described as a native American. It was a typical instance of the way in which all the hard, rough labor of the country was being done, from building railroads to getting out the timber from the forests or making shoes and blankets in the factories. Hard physical labor was no longer performed to any extent by native Americans. Contractors everywhere recruited their polyglot companies in the great cities and shipped them out into the country where there was a demand. The men employed at Highcourt were thus obtained in San Francisco by the head contractor and merely boarded in the town of Bellevue. They lived "across the tracks" in the labor settlement, or in lath and tar-paper shacks about the hills, camping in their eternal campaign of day labor wherever the job happened to take them. Few were

married, and all were given more or less to drink and riotous living when pay-day came; and of course they were constantly changing jobs. Adelle often heard the architect and the head contractor deplore the conditions of the labor market and the poor quality of work to be got out of the men at ruinous wages. She had also heard her neighbors, Carter Pound and Nelson Carhart, speak feelingly about the "foreign riff-raff" they had to employ on their estates. No workman had a conscience these days, they said. The women, too, talked of the rowdy character of the town "across the tracks," and the unsafety of the roads for women. Adelle did not think much about the matter, accepting it as a necessity, like gnats or drought or flood.

The Italians at least stuck to their jobs and were good-natured. Adelle always said "bon giorno" when she ran across them toiling up the slippery paths with their loads of stone or cement. She liked the way in which they showed their teeth and touched their hats politely to "la signora." They had a feeling for her as the mistress of the house, a latent sense of feudal loyalty to their employer that had quite disappeared among the other workmen. Apart from the Italians, the faces of the men upon the job were not familiar to her and were constantly changing, a strange one appearing almost every day. So Adelle felt less at home with them and rarely spoke to them unless she had an order to give that she could not easily transmit through the foreman.

One morning in early March — it was while the Seaboard trouble was acute — Adelle made her customary rounds of the place to see what was being done. She descended to the cañon and stopped for some time where the stone masons were laying up the wall that was to support the terraces. It was a continuation of the massive wall that rose sheer from the bottom of the little cañon to the front of the house, nearly a hundred feet in all perpendicularly from the bottom course to the first floor of the house. (It was the decision to thrust the house out over the cañon that had necessitated the building of this massive wall and had delayed matters for months.) Adelle had heard Archie grumble about the useless expense caused by this great wall, but she liked it. Its sheer height and strength gave her a pleasant sensation of accomplishment and endurance. She liked to stare up at it as she liked to see great trees or massive mountains or tall buildings. It was a symbol of something humanly important which supplied a secret craving in her soul.

So this morning she stood silently watching the masons at their slow work. One of the men she recognized as having been steadily on the job ever since her arrival at Highcourt. He was a youngish, slender man with sandy hair and blue eyes, and had the unmistakable air of being a native-born American. His sinewy hands were roughened by his work, and his face was almost a brick red, either from constant exposure to the sun or from drinking, probably

both. He seemed morose, as if he were consciously ignoring the presence of his "boss," and worked steadily on, once even failing to answer Adelle when she spoke, apparently unconscious of her presence behind him. Adelle liked especially to watch the masons at work. Their clever management of the great stones they had to handle, the precise yet easy way in which they lined and chipped and trigged and mortared, fitting all the detail of their rough mosaic, gave her a pleasant sense of accomplishment such as she had felt in her own efforts with metal and stone. It stirred an instinct for manual labor which was not far down in her character, and actually made her own shapely hands twitch to be at the fascinating work. And the masons' work grew so surely, course upon course, and when done seemed so solid, so eternal!... This morning she lingered longer than usual watching the young mason wield his hammer and trowel. Archie had ruffled her badly with his talk about money losses, and now she felt soothed, freed from stupid perplexities. The mason's large hands, she noted, were supple and dexterous — he made no useless movements. Occasionally he turned his head to spit tobacco or drew off to look at his wall, but these were the only interruptions in his rhythmic motions. He paid no attention whatever to the woman behind him.

Adelle was prettily dressed in a costume of white linen with a cloud of chiffon tied about her small hat and a parasol that she had purchased this summer

in Paris, which consisted of an enormous gold lace butterfly. She was fuller in figure than before her child had come and in perfect health, though still pale. Fresh and well cared for, she was if not beautiful very attractive and dainty — all that money could make of her human person. Adelle was not given to prolonged reflection of any sort, but probably she could not help comparing her own dainty, cool, exquisitely clean person with this sweaty, sunburned, coarse laborer in his black cotton shirt, frayed khaki trousers, and shoes that the lime had burned all color from. She must have felt a complacent sense of physical superiority to the man who was working for her, and perhaps congratulated herself that her lot in the universe had come out such a comfortable one.

The mason rolled up a large stone and prepared to set it home in the bottom course. Adelle observed that he was about to crush one of the Japanese shrubs that she had been at such pains to have planted along the bank of the cañon.

"Look out — don't hurt that bush!" she ordered peremptorily, as she was in the habit of speaking to servants.

The mason tranquilly deposited the rock full upon the shrub and proceeded to slap mortar around it and tap it home with his mallet.

"Did n't you hear me?" Adelle demanded, stepping forward and pointing at the offending rock with her heavily jeweled finger. "Take it out! I don't want the shrubs killed."

The mason looked up for the first time. There was a glint in his clear blue eyes as he said distinctly, without any trace of foreign accent, —

"It's got to go there!"

A smile relaxed his red face, a scornful smile at the impertinence of this dainty specimen of womankind who thought that the foundation course of his rock wall could be disturbed for such a trivial matter as a bush.

"No, it has n't," Adelle rejoined in her imperious tone. "Fix it some other way."

But the mason continued to pat his rock, looking around for the next one to lay upon it.

"Do what I say!" Adelle ordered, almost angrily, irritated by the man's obstinacy.

Then the mason rose, and with his trowel tapping the rock said slowly and emphatically, —

"I'm laying this wall — and I don't take no orders from you!"

Whereupon, after another shot from his hard blue eyes, he turned back to the wall.

At first Adelle was speechless; then she asked in a less peremptory tone, —

"Don't you know who I am?"

"Yes," the mason called back over his shoulder. "You're the boss up there." He indicated the unfinished house with a wave of his trowel, and went on with his work. He seemed indifferent to the fact that he was dealing with the mistress of Highcourt, and Adelle helplessly retreated.

"I will have you discharged!" she said as she walked away.

The mason did not reply, and his face exhibited no emotion over this dire threat.

After considerable search Adelle found the contractor and made her complaint against the mason.

"I warned him not to hurt the shrubs and he kept right on. Please discharge him at once."

The contractor, who had not been long away from the trowel and mortar himself, frowned.

"He's a good worker, ma'am," he protested. "It ain't always you can get a man like him out on a country job. Happens there is a building strike in the city, and he needed the work, so he came. And he's been steady, which is more than most masons."

"He's impudent," Adelle asserted with an air of finality.

"Very well, ma'am," the contractor said reluctantly. "I'll fire him to-night."

And Adelle thereupon went back to the house, gratified that she had enforced discipline, not hearing the contractor's profanity about meddlesome women. Later on the same day after the workmen had left, — they knocked off from their eight hours while the sun was still high in the heavens, — Adelle was wandering over the place, idly looking for a suitable location for a tennis-court. The doctor had told her to take some active exercise like tennis to prevent becoming unduly stout. And Archie had picked out a site below the new house on fairly level

ground, but Adelle wanted to have the court cut out of the steep hillside above the pool. Having found what she considered to be the right spot, which would necessitate much expensive excavation and building of retaining walls, she followed a little worn path through the eucalyptus grove over the brow of the hill, curious to discover where it led. After a time she emerged on the other side of the hill, and getting through the barbed wire fence that marked the boundary of her own estate, she followed the path along the farther side of the slope through a clearing in the woods to an open field. From this side there was a wild prospect westwards to the low haze which she knew indicated the presence of the Pacific. The country on this slope of the hills seemed wild and uninhabited. Adelle did not remember ever to have been in the place and wondered if it was accessible by motor. At the farther end of the field there was one of the tar-paper shacks that the workmen put up for themselves, and the path evidently led to this hut. Usually these shacks were huddled together in bunches nearer the town, within easy reach of shop and saloon, but this one stood all alone on the edge of the clearing. A man was bending over a tin basin before the door, apparently washing out some clothes. As Adelle approached, he looked up from his washing and Adelle recognized the impertinent stone mason. He looked at her coolly, as if this time she were trespassing on his domain, and as she came leisurely down the path, trying to ignore

his presence, he calmly threw out the dirty water from his pan on the path and went into his shack, pulling the door to after him with a bang. Adelle suspected the smile of contempt upon his face as he recognized her. She did not like the movement he had made in throwing the dirty water from his washpan directly in her path, although she was some distance away. Probably by this time he had learned his fate and took this means of testifying his resentment. The color rose in her pale face. She was not a proud woman, had no large amount of that self-importance which is the almost inevitable result of possessing wealth. But one of the penalties of property is that it cultivates whatever egotism and sensitiveness to its prerogative its owner is capable of. That one of the common laborers employed upon her estate should thus openly flout her made Adelle angry.

She thought first to turn back, — her walk was really aimless, — but she felt that the man would interpret such a retreat as due to his impertinence, would think that she was afraid of him. So she kept on past the shack into another open field. This was but the beginning of a wild treeless descent towards the ocean. The little tar-paper shack was the only sign of habitation in sight. There was an immense panorama of tumbled hill and valley bounded westward by the curving coast-line where the Pacific surges broke into faint lines of white spume, and where, she might reflect sadly, the ill-fated Sea-

board Railroad should now be running trains to open up all this unoccupied land to civilization. However, wild and unsettled as it was, it offered an attractive view, and Adelle at once coveted it. They must buy up this tract over the hill — they should have looked into it when they had arranged to take Highcourt. Thus musing, she wandered on into the country until the sun dipping into the ocean warned her to return for dinner.

As she came back along the crest of the hill, she thought again of the discharged stone mason and for her did a large amount of reflection. Why was he living like this in a lonely shack far away from everybody? Why had he chosen to isolate himself from his fellow-workmen, who herded together near the town where they could slip down to the saloons after their work? He must be by nature a sullen, unsociable fellow. And what sort of life did he live in there, doing his own washing and probably also his own cooking? A kind of curiosity about the truculent stone mason and his way of life thus occupied Adelle's unspeculative mind. He was a good-looking young fellow, lean and well muscled. If he were dissipated, as she had been told all the laborers were, his excesses had not yet shown in his person. What would he do now that he had lost his job at Highcourt?

There he was sitting on the doorstep of his shack, smoking his pipe, his bare arms akimbo, staring out across the sunset void towards the sea. He seemed also to be meditating with himself upon something

of interest. Upon Adelle's approach this time, he did not take himself off, but continued to smoke indifferently, totally ignoring her presence. As she came in front of him, she stopped involuntarily and found herself speaking to the mason.

"Good-evening," was all she said.

The man mumbled some reply, as if against his will. And then again the unexpected happened to Adelle,—at least the unforeseen. She asked him a question. It was a simple question, but it was entirely out of Adelle's character to make even the small advance implied by asking a question, especially to a servant who had been discharged on her orders.

"Do you live up here alone?"

"Have been living here," the man replied grudgingly, "till to-day. Don't expect to much longer," he added meaningly.

Adelle knew that he was referring to what had occurred earlier in the day between them, and throwing the blame for his dislodgment upon her.

"What are you going to do?" she asked after a pause.

He looked at her with mild astonishment for her question in his blue eyes, then said, —

"Donno exactly — get drunk, maybe," and he glanced at her truculently.

Adelle did not know why she went on talking to the man, but her curiosity was thoroughly aroused and the questions popped unexpectedly into her mind.

"Why did you kill that shrub when I asked you not to put the stone upon it?" she demanded next.

The man looked at her for a moment with an expression of mingled surprise, dislike, and amusement.

"Asked me! You ordered me."

"Why did you do it?" Adelle repeated, ignoring this subtle distinction.

"Guess I felt like it," he replied evasively. "I don't take no orders except from my boss," he grumbled. "Don't like no interference."

"But it's my place — you were working for me!" Adelle rejoined convincingly.

"And," the mason demanded bluntly, "who in hell are you, anyway?"

Adelle had not heard such direct language from a man for a good many years, although Archie sometimes hinted the same thing in slightly more polished language. At first she was staggered and thought she had made a mistake in giving this man another opportunity to insult her. But Adelle, thanks to her origin, was not easily insulted. She stayed on — to hear more.

"You've got a big pile of money and that place and lots of servants and motors and all the rest," the mason went on to explain. "But that 's no reason you should go bossing around my job 'bout what you don't know nothing. I get my orders from the boss, *my* boss — see? And I know how to lay a wall as good as any man — and your damned bushes should n't been there."

"You need n't be insulting," Adelle gasped with an attempt at dignity.

"Insultin'!" the man blazed. "Who's insultin'? It's you who are insultin' to God's earth — rich folks like you who've got more money that ain't yours by rights than you know what to do with. You think because you pay the bill you own the earth and every man on it. But you don't — not everybody! And the quicker you and your kind learn that the easier it will be for all of us."

This was what Major Pound meant by "anarchy among the working-classes." She had often heard him and Nelson Carhart deplore this, — using interchangeably the two dread terms, "socialism" and "anarchy." Both the gentlemen were of the opinion that "before we see an end to this spirit in the working-classes, we shall have bloodshed." But it was the first time Adelle had met the thing face to face, and it gave her a faint thrill. She tried to think of some of Major Pound's excellent arguments directed against the "anarchy" of the laboring-classes.

"You're paid good wages, very high wages," she said after a time, remembering that that was one of the grievances gentlemen most often complained of — that laborers were paid altogether too much, thanks to the unions, so that no profit was left for the men who supplied capital, and also that they did less work and poorer work than they had once done when they got only half the wages now paid.

"You think five dollars a day is big money, don't

you? It would n't go far to fit *you* out!" He nodded at Adelle's rich dress. "It would hardly get you a dinner — would n't pay for the booze your husband will drink to-night."

Adelle winced at this shot, because it was only too evident to the servants and the men about the place that Archie drank too much at times. How could she complain of the workingman's drinking and wasting his money, which was the next argument she remembered from her neighbors' repertory, when her own husband drank more than was good for him and many of the men they knew socially did the same?

"It's no thanks to you rich people we get big pay either," the man continued. "You'd like mighty well to cut it down to nothing if you could get your work done."

That was perfectly true. All their crowd at Bellevue were perpetually complaining of the high wages they had to pay. They gave it as an excuse for all sorts of petty meanness. Adelle felt that Major Pound would have the suitable reply to the mason's argument, but she could not remember it.

"Five dollars a day for a day's hard work ain't so much either, when you think how many days in the year there's nothing doing for one reason or another. Last year I only had four months' work all told on account of the strikes."

"Yes," Adelle joined in eagerly, feeling that this ground was familiar and safe, "but the strikes were

your own fault, were n't they? You did n't have to strike?"

For reply the mason looked wearily at her, and rising from his seat on the doorstep with a gesture remarked, —

"Well, I can't stay here gassin' all night, lady. I must hike along soon to get the Frisco train. . . . What do you care about it anyway, whether the strikes are our fault or not? You've got plenty of the stuff, and we little folks ain't got nothin' but what we earn, and that ought to satisfy you. We must work for you sometimes, and you don't have to do a damn thing for anybody no times. You've got the luck, and we ain't! See? And that's about all there is to it."

Adelle felt that so far as her own case went, the man had come remarkably near the truth. The mason turned, with an afterthought.

"And I'm not whinin' 'bout it neither, remember that! I can always earn enough to keep me goin' and get whiskey when I want it."

He said it with a touch of pride, his workman's boast that he was beholden to no one for meat or drink. It was more than Archie could say now or at any time in his life.

"Are you married?" Adelle asked, feeling that if there was a woman in the situation another line of argument might be used.

"Married! Hell, no! What do I want of being married?"

Married men, Adelle had heard, were likely to be steadier workers than the unmarried. Also more what her class called "moral."

"I should think you would want to have your own home and children in it," she ventured.

The mason gave her an ironical look full of meaning.

"That would sure be nice, if I could always give 'em plenty to eat and education, the same as you can. But what can a man do with a wife when he's here to-day and off to the other end of the land to-morrow lookin' for a job? A steady job in one place where it's fit for a woman to live ain't to be found every day. . . . A workingman who marries, unless he's got money in the bank and a sure payin' job that'll last, is a fool or worse. What good is it to bring children into the world to be like him or maybe worse?"

Adelle had no reply to this blunt logic. Marriage, he seemed to think, was one of the privileges of the rich class, which she was sure ought not to be so.

"The trouble with the workingman, ma'am, is that he has done that too long,—got families that had to live the best they could, any old way, and take any old job they could get. That's what's made it easy goin' for you! But the workingman is learnin' a thing or two. Men like me won't get married, nor have children to slave for the rich."

"What do the girls do?" Adelle asked, thinking of her own fate if she had been left in the Church Street rooming-house.

The mason shrugged his shoulders and came out with another brutality.

"Some of 'em go into the houses for your men to use — there's always that for 'em," he added, with a disagreeable laugh. "No, ma'am, I tell you until things are made more right in this world, it's better for a poor man to get along the best he can without draggin' a woman after him and a lot of helpless children."

"I did n't know it was as bad as that," Adelle remarked helplessly.

"I guess, ma'am, there are a good many things about life you don't know."

"That's so," Adelle admitted honestly.

"But I know!" the mason exclaimed with rising excitement. "I've seen it over and over, everywhere. I've seen it in my own family," he said in a burst of bitter confidence. "There were eight of us and we were only middling poor until father died. The old man was a carpenter, up north in Sacramento County. He had a small place outside of town and we raised some stuff. But he got sick and died, when he were n't forty, and mother had the whole eight of us on her hands. I was just twelve and my oldest brother fifteen, — he was the only one could earn a dollar. We got on somehow, those that lived. Two of my sisters are married to farmers and there's another — well, she's the other thing." He stopped to look belligerently at Adelle as if she had somehow to do with it. "She was married to a

workingman, good enough, I guess, but he got out of work and heard of something up north and never came back. . . . We boys scattered around where we could get work. Two of us is married and got families. Guess they wish often enough they had n't, too!"

Adelle was absorbed by the mason's personal statement. She had forgotten by this time her first self-consciousness in talking to the discharged workman, and he, too, seemed less truculent, as if he enjoyed letting off steam and stating his point of view to his ex-employer.

"How old are you?" Adelle asked.

"Twenty-eight," the mason replied.

That was only a few years older than Adelle herself, but she recognized that the man's experience of living had been far more than hers, also deeper, so that he was justified in having opinions on the serious things of life. Wealth, she might think, was not the only road to "a full life" so much talked of in her circle.

"Have you always been a stone mason?" she wanted to know.

"Pretty much ever since I could lift a stone. An old feller took me from mother to work for my keep when I was fourteen. He used to do some mason work, and he knew how to lay stone — none better! He learned his trade back East where he come from. He was one of the real forty-niners, and knew my grandfather's folks — they all came to California the same time. . . . I've been all over this

country, up and down the Coast, to Alasky and over in Nevada, at Carson City; drilling for oil, too, south. Oh, I've seen things," he mused complacently, puffing at his pipe and scratching his bare arms that were as smooth and brown as fine bronze. "And I tell you there ain't much in it for the laboring-man, no matter what wages he gets, unless he's got extry luck, which most of 'em ain't. No wonder he goes after booze when he has the chance. What's there in it for him anyhow?"

Adelle, who had not been educated to philanthropy and social service, did not attempt to answer this difficult question.

"Not that I booze often," the mason explained with pride. "I reckon not to make a hog of myself, but when you've been off on a job for months, working all day long six days in the week in the heat and dust, you accumulate a thirst and a devilment in you that needs letting out."

He grinned at Adelle as if he felt that she might be sympathetic with his simple point of view and added, —

"I guess that's what made me sassy to you this morning!"

It was his sole apology. They both laughed, accepting it as such, and Adelle, to shift the topic, remarked, —

"You've got a nice place up here for your house."

The mason wrinkled his lips against the suggestion of sentiment.

"The shack's all right — kind of fur to tote supplies over the hill. But I can't stand those dagoes and their dirty ways. They have too many boarders where they live."

His American ancestry betrayed itself thus in his selection of an exclusive position for his bunk. The conversation seemed to have come to a natural conclusion, but Adelle did not start. At last she said what she had had in mind for some time, —

"You'd better stay here — come back to work Monday."

"I don't know as I want to," the mason replied, with a touch of his former truculency. "I can get all the work I want most anywheres."

"I'll speak to Mr. Ferguson about it," Adelle said. "Good-night!"

She could not do more, she thought, as she hurried along the path, although she was unreasonably anxious not to have the young stone mason leave, more anxious than she had been that morning to have him discharged for his insolence to her. When she was about to enter the wood, she turned and looked back at the shack. She hoped that he was not going to start on a spree. The mason, who had been sitting on the step where she had left him, rose as if he had come to a sudden resolution and marched into the shack. Adelle felt sure that he had made up his mind to go to San Francisco and get his "booze." She divined the craving in him for excitement, some relief from his toilsome hours under the hot sun. Possibly he

had fought against this desire all the summer, restrained from breaking loose by a prudence which she had defeated by arbitrarily discharging him from his job and could not so easily restore with her change of whim. She did not feel any personal blame for his action, however, nor did she blame him for yielding to this gross temptation, as her more conservative neighbors might, although they sometimes yielded themselves both to drink and the stock market to stimulate their nerves. She merely hoped that he would think better of his purpose. For the man interested her, and before she dressed for dinner she sent a servant to the village with a note for the contractor, asking him to reëngage the discharged stone mason and be sure that he came back to work on the Monday.

XXXVI

NEVERTHELESS, when Adelle looked for him the next Monday morning his was not among the faces of the men at work on the lofty retaining wall. She asked the contractor about him, but the boss merely shrugged his shoulders and said that somebody had seen the man getting on the late Saturday night train for the city.

"It's too bad," he added, to punish Adelle for interfering in his business. "He was a mighty good worker, and you don't get that kind often these days. I'd rather have him than any four of these dagoes."

He waved a disdainful arm at the squad of sons of sunny Italy who were toiling along the wall.

Adelle did not forget the young stone mason, but she could do nothing more for him even had she known just what to do. Then one morning when she made her usual rounds, she was happily surprised to find him back on the job, working as was his wont a little to one side of his foreign mates with his own helper. His face looked as red as ever, and his eyes were also suspiciously red, but this was the only evidence of his spree that she could see. As Adelle advanced to the place where he was working, the mason glanced up and replied gruffly to her greeting, —

"Morning, ma'am!"

She knew that he was not ashamed of himself, merely embarrassed. And she thought that if he had not felt kindly to her, he would not have come back to Highcourt to work after his spree — or was it, perhaps, his pleasant shack on the hill that lured him to his old job? Adelle did not tell him that she was glad to see him back, but passed on without stopping. Presently, however, when his helper had disappeared for a load of mortar she came back to the place and watched him. He worked as steadily and swiftly as ever, his lithe bronze arm lifting the stones accurately to their places, his wrist giving a practiced flip to each trowel full of mortar, which landed it on the right spot. Adelle wanted to talk to him again, to ask him questions, but did not know how to begin. Apparently he meant to let her make all the advances.

"That's fascinating work," she said at length.

He flipped a fresh dab of mortar to place and replied, —

"You might think so lookin' on — but no work is fascinatin' when you've had too much of it. I've laid enough stone to last me a lifetime."

"What else had you rather do?"

"Oh," he said, pausing a moment to wipe the sweat from his face with the back of his shirt-sleeve, "'Most anything at times! I tried mining once, but it's worse and uncertain. And lumbering — no pay. When I was a kid I wanted to be a doctor —

that's before I left school. A nice sort of doctor I'd make, would n't I?"

He laughed at himself, but Adelle felt that in spite of his mirthless laugh his mind was chafing. He was dissatisfied with himself and the work he was doing and hungered for some larger demand upon his powers than laying so many feet of rock wall per day. She herself had so little of this sort of hunger in her own soul that it made the young mason all the more interesting to her.

"You might save up your money and try —" she began.

"To be a doctor?" he laughed back. "I saved up once—got most five hundred dollars and a feller came along and persuaded me to put it into some land. Well, I got the land still. . . . No, ma'am, there ain't much chance to change for the workingman when he's once fixed in his creek bed. He must just roll along with the rest the best he can. And I'm better off than most because I've got a paying trade. Lots of boys like me and my brothers don't learn ever to do anything, and just slave on all their lives at any job comes handy until they are all wore out. Lots and lots. Their folks can't keep 'em in school and they never know enough to more'n sign their names. All they are good for is rough work, same as the dago helper here. He thinks two dollars a day big money. I guess it is to him."

He spat disdainfully with all an American's contempt for the inferior.

"I expect where he come from it was a fortune, two dollars a day, eh?" He appealed to Adelle to appreciate the joke. "Think of that now! And he's got a woman and kids, and I bet has saved money, too. But he's only a dago," he explained tolerantly.

"Say," he resumed after a pause. "It costs more 'n two dollars to go to the opery in San Francisco."

"Did you go to the opera?" Adelle asked, recalling that Archie had said something about the current engagement of the New York Opera company. They had a box or something for the season — they always did. "What did they give?"

"Oh, it was some German piece. It took place in the woods with a lot of folks in armor, but the music was fine, and there was one place where they had a castle upon a big hill, like that where my shack is, way off towards the clouds, and a river down in front going by with women in it swimming," and he described with relish the last act of the "Rheingold-dammerung," which Adelle recognized because she had seen it many times in Europe and been horribly bored by it. The story of the opera seemed to interest the young mason especially. He retold it minutely for Adelle's benefit, offering amusing explanations of its mythological mysteries.

"But how did you happen to go to the opera?" Adelle asked.

"Well," he said in vague diffidence, "I was feeling pretty good by that time, and I seen the poster.

I had the price—why should n't I go?" he demanded brusquely; and with another sardonic laugh the real motive came out, — "I wanted to see what you folks who go to the opery see—how you enjoy yourselves. Well, the opery ain't so bad — it ain't one bit bad," and he attempted to hum the Rheingold music. "I believe I'll go to the opery again when I'm on the loose and don't know any better way to blow my money. I like music," he added inconsequentially. "Mother used to sing sometimes."

This was as far as they got conversationally that day. Something interrupted Adelle in the midst of the musical discussion and she did not have a chance to return to the wall. But she had almost daily opportunity for talk with the young mason in the succeeding weeks, for after his return from his spree, he worked steadily on his job every day. He was one of the very few American-born workmen employed at Highcourt, and after their misunderstanding and subsequent agreement, Adelle felt better acquainted with him than with the others. He taught her to handle the trowel and to lay stone. After a few attempts, she managed quite well and found a curious pleasure in the manual labor of fitting stone to stone and properly bedding the whole in cement. She learned to select the right pieces with a rapid glance and to chip an obtrusive corner or face a rock with a few taps of the heavy hammer. It gave her a pleasure akin to her experiments in jewelry, and it must be said the results were better. She used to show her

visitors proudly the bit of wall she had laid up herself under the young mason's direction and assert that, instead of bookbinding or jewelry or other ladylike occupations, she meant to set up stone walls about Highcourt for her recreation. The Bellevue people considered her whim a harmless bit of eccentricity in the young mistress of Highcourt, and she was the object of many a good-humored joke about her new method of "beating the unions." Little did any of these pleasure-loving rich folk suspect where Adelle's instinct for manual labor came from, how natural it was for her to work at coarse tasks with her large, shapely hands.

She needed all the distraction she could get, for these were not happy days for Adelle within her big new house. The inexplicable stringency of money grew worse, and there were constant quarrels between her and Archie over her "extravagance" when he was at home. Adelle could not understand why she should be obliged to curb her prodigal hand in making "improvements" at Highcourt. Did the trust officers not tell her that hers was a "large fortune," not far from five millions, enough surely to permit a woman freedom for every whim? If there was trouble about money, it must be Archie's fault: she wished she had never consented to take her property out of the safe keeping of the careful trust company. Her logic in these discussions, if irrefutable, was bitter, and Archie resented it, all the more be-

cause he knew that he had made a fool of himself with his wife's ample fortune, and allowed stronger men to bite him. He had not sufficient character to confess the fact and refrain altogether from further speculation. He tried instead to make good what had been lost in Seaboard and was always nagging Adelle to dispose of certain stocks and bonds that still remained from the investments of the prudent trust company. But Adelle was obstinate: she would not sell anything more. So Archie's large debit at his brokers went on rolling up, and there continued to be "words" at Highcourt whenever he was there, which was less often then he might have been.

Proverbially, money is the cause of the bitterest disputes in families. Abstractly it might seem remarkable that this should be so, but the peculiar nature of property of all sorts is that it becomes the inmost shrine of its possessor's being, and when the shrine is robbed or desecrated, the injured personality resents the outrage with bitterness. Many a man or woman will submit with Christian fortitude to insults upon character or positive unjust burdens, but will flame into rebellion at the least touch upon the purse. In the case of Archie and Adelle it was all the more remarkable because neither had been born to wealth so that property could become a part of the nature: they were both "the spoiled children of fortune" as the story-books say, having had their wealth thrust upon them unexpectedly, and so might

take its loss lightly. Not at all! Adelle felt as much wronged as if she had been the last of an ancient line of dukes and duchesses or had accumulated the riches of Clark's Field by a lifetime of toil and self-denial. Was it not *hers?* Had the law not made it inalienably a part of her? Such is human nature in a capitalistic society.

Bellevue began to gossip about the couple at Highcourt, and divided as always into two camps with shades of opinion within each camp. The women were generally for Archie, even if he had been foolish with his wife's money and was conducting his "affair" with Irene Pointer rather recklessly. If his wife were less stupid and selfish about not going about with him in society, she could have "held him." The men liked Archie well enough, but knew that he was "no good."

XXXVII

It was some time after the young mason's return to his job before Adelle even learned his name. She had no curiosity about his name, indicating how little of the personal or sentimental there was in the interest she felt in him. He was just the "mason," and she always addressed him as "mason" until one day she heard the foreman call him — "Clark"; and then, when the foreman had passed on, she said with mild curiosity, —

"Is your name Clark?"

"Yes," the man replied with a touch of pride in the pure English name, — "Clark without the *e*. I'm Tom Clark. Father's name was Stanley Clark, same as grandfather's. Everybody about Sacramento used to know old Stan Clark!"

"My name was Clark, too, before I was married," Adelle remarked.

"Did you spell it with an *e*?" Tom Clark asked.

"No, the same as yours, without the *e*," she replied.

"We must be related somewheres," the mason laughed, with a sense of irony.

"Where did your family come from?"

"Somewhere East — Missouri, I think. But that was long ago — before the gold times. Grandfather

Stan came out in forty-nine and settled on the Sacramento River, and that was where father was raised."

Adelle felt a slight increase in her interest in the mason from their having the same name, and she remarked idly, —

"So your family lived once in Missouri?"

"The Clarks came from Missouri — that's all I know. Mother's folks were Scotch-Irish, and that's where I get my red head, I guess!"

Like most Americans of his class he knew nothing more of his origin than the preceding two generations. The family was lost in the vague limbo of "back East somewheres." Yet he was proud that the Clarks had come from the East and were among the first Americans to enter the golden land of opportunity. And he apologized for the failure of his ancestors to attach to themselves a larger share of prosperity.

"If we could have hung on to grandfather's old ranch, we'd not one of us been working for other folks to-day. He had a hundred and sixty acres of as pretty a bit of land as there is in Sacramento Valley — part of it is now in the city limits, too. But father was sort of slack in some ways, — did n't realize what a big future California had, — so he sold off most of the ranch for almost nothing, and mother had to part with the rest."

He flipped a trowelful of mortar and whistled as if to express thus his sense of fate.

"Too bad," Adelle replied. "They say you ought never to sell any land. It's all likely to be more valuable some day."

"Sure!" the mason rejoined sourly. "That's why most of us work for a few of you!"

"What do you mean?" Adelle asked, puzzled by the economic theory implied in this remark.

But before Clark could explain, Adelle was summoned to the house. As she went up the slippery path she thought about what the mason had said, about his being a Clark, too. She felt herself on much closer terms of knowledge and sympathy with this workman of her own name than with the fashionable women who had come for luncheon to Highcourt.

Hitherto Adelle had met in the journey of life mainly coarse-minded persons — I do not mean by this, nasty or vulgar people, but simply men and women who were content to live on the surfaces and let others do for them what thinking they needed — people upon whom the experience of living could make little fine impression. In the rooming-house, with her aunt and uncle and the transient roomers, naturally there had been no refinement of any sort. Nor, in spite of its luxury and its boast of educating the daughters of "our best families," had the expensive boarding-school to which the trust company in their blindness condemned their ward added much to Adelle's spiritual opportunities. Pussy Comstock, for all her sophistication, was no better, and as for the "two Pols" and Archie Davis, the reader can

judge what fineness of mind or soul was to be found in them. Even the officers of the Washington Trust Company, who were of indubitable respectability and prominence in their own community, — everything that bankers should be, — had neither mental nor spiritual elevation, and coarsely pigeonholed their ideas about life as they had done with Adelle. The thinking of the best spirits in Bellevue has been exemplified in the utterance upon labor that Adelle had taken from Major Pound and Nelson Carhart who are doubtless still enunciating the same trite remarks at the dinner-table and in their clubs with a profound conviction of thinking seriously upon important topics. All these diverse human elements, which thus far had been cast up in Adelle's path, were good people enough — some of them earnest and serious about living, but all without exception coarse-minded. All the wealth of Clark's Field had not yet given its owner one simple, clear-thinking human companion.

The young stone mason, Tom Clark, outwardly crude and coarse and with a knowledge of life limited by his personal estate, was nevertheless the first person Adelle had met who tried to do his own thinking about life. It was not very important thinking, perhaps, but it had for Adelle the attraction of freshness and sincerity. The mason stimulated the mistress of Highcourt intellectually and spiritually, which would have made the good ladies at luncheon with her that day laugh or do worse. Adelle felt that he could help

her to understand many things that she was beginning to think about, that were stirring in her dumb soul and troubling her. And she knew that she could talk to him about them, as she could not talk to George Pointer nor Major Pound nor even Archie. In her simple way, when she discovered what she wanted, she went directly after it until she was satisfied. She meant to talk more with the young stone mason of the widespread race of Clark.

The next time Adelle made the ascent of the hill behind Highcourt she took her little boy with her, and after wandering about the eucalyptus wood with him in search of flowers sent him back to the house with his nurse and kept on over the hill to the shack where Clark lived. She examined the tar-paper structure more carefully, noticing that the mason had set out some vegetables beside the door and that a little vine was climbing up the paper façade of the temporary home. She knew that the mason was still at his work below, and so she ventured to peek into the shack. Everything within the one small room was clean and orderly. There was a rough bunk in one corner, which was made into a neat bed, and beneath this were arranged in pairs the man's extra shoes, one pair bleached by lime and another newer pair of modern cut for dress use. In one corner was a small camper's stove with a piece of drain-pipe for chimney; a board table, one or two boxes, and some automobile oil cans made up the furniture of the room. There was also a little lime-spotted canvas

trunk that probably contained the mason's better clothes and his extra tools. On the table was a lamp and a few soiled magazines, with which Clark probably whiled away free hours when not disposed to descend to the town for active amusement.

For a woman in Adelle's position such a workingman's home has the interest of the unfamiliar. It is always incomprehensible to a woman nurtured to a high standard of comfort to realize a totally different and presumably lower standard of living. This may be seen when travelers peer with exclamations of surprise and pity or disgust into the stuffy homes of European peasants or the dark mud-floor rooms of Asiatics. The prejudices of race as well as of social class seem to come to the surface in this concrete experience of how another kind of human being sleeps, eats, and amuses himself. With Adelle this sensation of strangeness was not very keen, because her own acquaintance with the habits of the rich was less than ten full years old. Clark's one-room tarpaper shack did not seem so squalid to her as it might to Irene Pointer, though Adelle had never before had the curiosity to enter a humble dwelling. She looked about her, indeed, with a certain appreciation of its coziness and adequacy. All that a single man really needed for decency and modest comfort was to be found here, at least under the conditions of the sunny California clime, which Providence seems to have adapted for poverty. All the wealth of Clark's Field could have added little valuable

luxury to this tar-paper shack on the ridge of high hills with a prospect of mountain, valley, and ocean before the front door. Of course, with the assistance of Clark's Field, its proprietor would have been sitting in the great room of the Pacific Coast Club, as Archie was at this moment, imbibing foreign wine and deploring the "agitation among the people," which was making a very bad stock market.

After having taken in every item in the single room carefully, Adelle went on her way full of thought. Her first impression was that the mason must be a superior sort of workman because he kept his home and his few possessions neatly and orderly. She did not know that there are many naturally clean persons in the laboring-classes. However, she made no fetish of tubbing herself once a day, and thought on to more important considerations. Evidently the young man was attached to his beautiful solitary abode — he had planted and watered a vine for the door. She resolved to tell him that he could help himself to the fruit and flowers in Highcourt. If he cared to set out a small flower garden, he could get seeds and slips from her own formal garden. But there was the question of water: it would not be possible for him to start a garden on this hilltop without water. She supposed that he must lug what water he used from Highcourt. Probably that was the use he put those large tin cans to. . . .

Adelle's mind was naturally slow in its operations. Ideas and impressions seemed to lie in it for months

like seed in a dry and cold ground without any sign of fruitful germination. But they were not always dead! Sometimes, after days or weeks or even months of apparent extinction, they came to life and bore fruit, — usually a meager fruit. To-day, for an inexplicable reason, she began to think again of the mason's family name. He was a Clark without the *e*, and his people came from "back East." It might seem strange that this fact had not at once roused a train of ideas in Adelle's mind when she first learned of it. But the lost heir to Clark's Field had never been to her of that vital importance he had been to her mother and uncle. It must be remembered that her aunt was the only one of her family who had been at all near to her, and her aunt had small faith in the Clark tradition and was not of a reminiscent turn of mind. Of course, the trust officers had explained carefully to Adelle's aunt in her hearing all about the difficulties with the title, and at various times after her aunt's death had alluded to this matter in their brief communications with her. But they had not gone into the specific measures they had taken to look for the lost heirs of old Edward Clark, nor the means by which the title at last had been "quieted," to use the expressive legal term. And finally all such business details passed through Adelle's mind like a stream of water through a pipe, leaving little sediment. She had not thought about the Clarks or Clark's Field for some years. . . .

To-day she began wondering whether by chance

this young mason of the name of Clark could be related to any of her mother's people. She must find out more about his family history. So she prolonged her walk among the hills until the declining sun told her that the mason would have returned to his home. Then she came back along the path by the shack. Clark was inside, whistling loudly, and evidently preparing his evening meal, for a thin stream of bluish smoke emerged into the still air from the mouth of the drain-pipe. Adelle called, —

"Mr. Clark!"

The mason came to the open door. He was bareheaded and barearmed, clothed merely in khaki trousers and red flannel undershirt, but he was glisteningly clean and shaved. In one hand he carried his frying-pan into which he had just put some junks of beef. He seemed surprised on seeing the lady of Highcourt at his door and scowled slightly in the sunlight.

"I was going by," she explained without any embarrassment, "and wanted to ask you about something."

The mason removed his pipe from his teeth and stood at attention.

"Do you know where your family came from before they lived in Missouri?" she asked. "I mean the Clarks, your grandfather's people."

The mason looked surprised to find this was the important question she had come all the way to his shack to ask.

"No, I don't know, Mrs. Davis."

"Did you ever hear any one of them speak of Alton?"

He slowly shook his head.

"Never heard the name of the place before that I know of."

"Oh," Adelle observed in a disappointed tone, "I thought you might know where they came from before the Missouri time."

The mason gave a short, harsh laugh and stuck his pipe back between his teeth.

"I don't see as it makes any odds where they came from," he remarked. "I guess we ain't got any fancy family tree to boast of."

"Well," Adelle observed; and then, recollecting her other intention, she said,—

"Don't you want some flowers or fruit or stuff from the garden? You can't raise much up here."

"No, thanks; I don't want nothin'— much obliged to you."

In spite of the conventional terms there was a surly bûrr to his tone that belied the courtesy. Adelle was surprised at the hardness of his mood. She felt quite friendly, almost intimate with him, after all their talks, and now he was as gruff as he had been the first day. She looked at his face for an explanation. He was scowling slightly, and in the reddish light of the setting sun his face seemed to burn as with fever, and his blue eyes glinted dan-

gerously. She could not make out what was going on in the man's mind. Probably he did not himself rightly know. The discovery that he bore the same name as his employer had once might have set off some unpleasant train of subconscious reflection, accentuating the bitter sense of class distinction and the unreason of it, which he was only too prone to entertain. He did not want any "kindness" from rich people. He worked for them because he must, but he worked in a spirit of armed neutrality at the best, like so many of his kind, and he spat mentally upon Carnegie libraries and all other evidences of the philanthropic spirit in those relieved from the toil of day labor.

Adelle could not follow this, but she knew that the man was close to an explosion point of some sort, as he had been that other time when she had encountered him before his shack. Then he had suddenly jumped up from the doorstep, the lust for action in his movement, and had disappeared for the better part of a week. She felt that he might be on the verge of another such outbreak and tried clumsily to prevent it if possible. She hesitated, thinking what to say, while the mason glared at her as if he were controlling himself with an effort.

"I thought you might like something," she said at last. "There's plenty, and you are welcome to what you want."

"I don't want nothin'"; and he added meaningly, — "least of all flowers and fruits."

"There are a lot of magazines at the house — you might call for them or books."

"I don't do much reading."

He checked her every move. There was nothing more to say, and so Adelle turned slowly and went on her way to her home, thinking rather sadly that the young mason would surely go to "'Frisco" tonight and might never come back. Meanwhile, the mason had entered his shack and closed the door, as if he wished to keep out intruders. He was not whistling. . . .

That evening Archie arrived by motor from the city, bringing with him some friends, and others came up to dinner from Bellevue, so that they had a party of eight or ten. Dinner was late, and as the night was pleasant with starlight and a soft breeze, coffee was served on the unfinished terrace. As Adelle was pointing out to one of the guests the line of proposed wall, she saw a man's figure coming down the path from the eucalyptus grove. She watched it draw near to the terrace, then stop. She was sure that it was the mason's figure. He must be on his way to town to take the evening train for the city, which passed Bellevue at nine forty-five. She utterly forgot what she was saying, what was being said to her, in her intense effort to discover in the darkness what the figure just above the terrace was doing. She could not tell whether he had gone back to skirt the house and go on by a more roundabout way or was waiting for an opportunity to descend

unobserved. Some time afterwards she heard the rolling of a stone on the hill-path and knew that he must have retraced his steps to the grove. She thought that there was no path down that way and was unreasonably glad for — she did not know what. Archie had observed her distraction and remarked, —

"Must be one of the workmen sneaking about up there. They are all over the place, thick as flies. There's one has built himself a shack on the other side of the hill and worn a path down here across the terrace — cheeky rascal. I'll tell Ferguson to smoke him out!"

Adelle said nothing, but she was sure that Ferguson would never execute that order.

XXXVIII

THE next morning Adelle went straight to the terrace wall from her room where she had her coffee. All she had to do was to step out of the French window and around the corner of the house, for she had not yet moved to the rooms designed for her in the other wing. This morning she wished to know surely whether the mason had gone off on his spree or had really turned back as she thought he had the night before. And there he was on the job, sure enough! Upon her approach, he looked up and rumpled his hat over his head, which was his shamefaced method of saluting a lady. He still looked somewhat stormy, but there were no traces of debauch in his eyes, and he was tossing in his mortar with a fine swing, and handling the heavy stones as if they were loaves of bread.

"Good-morning, Mr. Clark," was all that Adelle said, and started to go on.

But the mason called out, —

"Say!" and throwing down his trowel he hunted for something in his hip pocket. "You was asking me about that town in the East — Alton. Well, I found this after you had gone."

He produced a tattered package of what seemed to

be old letters, yellowed with age and torn at the corners, and handed them up to Adelle.

"They were grandfather's and mother always kep' 'em; I don't know why. When she died one of my sisters giv' em to me. I been totin' 'em 'round in my trunk ever since. They're kind of dirty and spotted," he apologized for their condition. "But they were pretty old, I guess, when I got 'em, and they ain't had much care since. . . . Last night after you were up there I got 'em out of the trunk and tried to read 'em. There's one there from Alton — it's got the postmark on the outside."

Clark pointed with his mortar-coated thumb to the faint circle of the stamp in the corner. Adelle took the letter from him with a sense of faintness that she could not explain. She had been right in her conjecture: that seemed to her a very great point.

"I was bringin' 'em up to the house last night," the mason explained, "but seen you had company, so kep' 'em until to-day."

So he had not thought of going to San Francisco on a spree! Adelle's woman conceit might have been sadly dashed.

"May I read them?" she asked, looking curiously at the package of faded letters.

"Sure! Read 'em over. That's what I brought 'em to you for," the mason said heartily. "I could n't make much out of the old writing myself. I ain't no scholar, you know, and the ink is pretty thin in

spots. But I seed the Alton postmark and thought you would be interested."

"I'll look them over," Adelle said slowly, "and let you know what I find in them."

She carried the letters with her back to her rooms, but she did not open them at once. She had no desire to do so, now that she had them. It was not until the afternoon, while she was lounging in her room, — Archie having gone to play polo at the club, — that she finally took up the stained packet of old letters, and opened them. They were addressed variously to "E. S. Clark," or "Edward S. Clark," and one to "E. Stanley Clark," but that was a later one than the others and had to do with some land business in California. The mason had spoken of his grandfather as "Stanley Clark" — "old Stan Clark," he called him. Evidently the elder Clark had called himself by his middle name after settling in California, but before that he had been known as "Edward" or "Edward S. Clark."

Almost at random Adelle opened a letter — the one that the mason had pointed out to her as having the Alton postmark. It was written in a scrawly, heavy hand, which was almost illegibly faint and yellow after the lapse of more than fifty years, and must have been written by one little accustomed to the pen, for there was much hard spelling as well as irregular chirography. Adelle looked for the signature. It was in the lower inside corner, and the name, in the effort to economize space, was almost

unreadable. It might be "Sam." After considerable puzzlement, she felt sure that it was "Sam." The *S* had an indubitable corkscrew effect, and the straight splotches must have been an *m*, and there was the faint trace of the *a*. But who was "Sam"?

It was a few moments before Adelle realized that the "Sam" at the bottom of the old letter was an abbreviation for her grandfather's name. It was old Samuel Clark's signature. When she had grasped this fact, she turned back to look at the date. It was 1847 — July 19. She looked at the envelope. It was addressed to "Mr. Edward S. Clark," at "Mr. Knowlton's, 8 Dearborn St., Chicago." At last Adelle got to the letter itself and spent much time trying to make out the parts she could read. It was all about family matters — the letter of one brother to another. There were references to some family trouble, and "Sam" seemed to be defending himself from a charge of unfair dealing with his brother, and protested his good faith many times. Adelle was not greatly interested in the contents of the letter, with its reference to a musty family row. She knew too little of the Clark history to appreciate the significance of Sam's verbose self-defense.

What she did realize overwhelmingly was the fact that the young mason was related to her — was her second cousin, the grandson of the elder brother Clark, while she was the granddaughter, through her mother, of the younger brother. And that was all she realized for the present. It was a large enough fact,

She was not a familyless woman as she had always supposed, and this young workman on her estate was her cousin. He had the same blood that she had in part, was of the same race, and as he inherited through his father from the elder brother, while she inherited through the mother from the younger brother, he would be considered in certain social systems to be her family superior! The Head of the Family! Adelle had no great class pride, as must have been perceived, but even to her it was something of a shock to discover that she was cousin to the stone mason employed in building her wall — an uneducated young man who chewed tobacco, used poor grammar, and went on sprees, vulgar sprees, for Archie had taught her that money makes a great difference in the way men get drunk. And she remembered that Clark had said, in his bitter indictment of the laboring-man's lot, that one of his sisters was not all that she should be! Naturally it gave her much to think about. Not the question whether she should tell him what she had discovered from his grandfather's letters, but the fact itself of her relationship with the young mason. That was stunning at first, even to Adelle!

But as she lay upon her pretty bed, which had been painted for her in Paris with a flock of unblushing Amours, and stared at the painted ceiling, her good sense rapidly came back to her. In her character it was the substitute for humor. After all, there was nothing so extraordinary in the fact. There

must be many similar cases of poor relations among all the people she knew, even with the Paysons and the Carharts, who were the primates of Bellevue society. When families had been living for a long time on this earth, there must grow up such inequalities of fortune between the different branches, even among the different members of the same generation. If people were only aware of all their relations, there would doubtless be many surprises in life. What would Archie say to it? In the first place, she probably would not tell him, and he had no good ground for criticism anyway. The Davises were not highly distinguished folk: no doubt Archie could find in any telephone directory plenty of distant cousins of humble station. As for Tom Clark himself, she did not feel that he would be disagreeable after he had learned his relationship to his employer. He might whistle and laugh and get off one of those ironical and contemptuous utterances about society of which he seemed fond.

After thinking it all over, Adelle rose and dressed herself; then, taking the package of letters, of which she had only casually examined the others, went up the path to the tar-paper shack. It was a hot afternoon, and the mason had only just come back from his task. He had not yet washed, and was sitting before his door, all red and sweaty, smoking his pipe and scratching his arms in a sensuous relaxation of muscles after the day's work. He looked altogether the workman. He did not rise at her approach, but

removing his pipe, remarked, as if he had been expecting her visit, —

"Well, did you read the stuff?"

"Yes," Adelle replied, holding out the package; "I read some of them."

"That's more'n I could do," he said, receiving the letters and staring at them as if they had been Egyptian hieroglyphs. "What could you make out of 'em?"

"One thing!" Adelle exclaimed. "Your grandfather and my grandfather must have been own brothers."

"You don't say!" Tom Clark exclaimed, throwing back his head and giving vent to that robust, ironical laugh that Adelle had expected. "So old Stan Clark was your great-uncle?"

Adelle nodded.

"Just think of that now!" and the mason went off into another peal of laughter which made Adelle uncomfortable. He did not take seriously his relationship with the mistress of Highcourt. "I bet old grandfather Stan would have been mighty surprised if he could see his niece and her swell house!"

Suddenly the mason rose, and, fetching out a box from his house, said with an elaborate flourish of ironical courtesy, —

"Sit down, cousin, and we'll talk it over."

Adelle accepted the seat meekly.

"So father's folks did n't really come from Missouri — but from way back East?" he inquired with

appreciation of the added aristocracy that this gave the family.

"Surely they came from Alton," Adelle replied. "That was where the Clarks had always lived — ever since before the Revolution."

"As long as that! Think of it — I'll be damned — beggin' your pardon, cousin!" the mason exclaimed.

Except for this familiar use of the term of relationship Tom Clark's attitude was respectful enough, more humorous than anything else, as if the news Adelle had given him merely completed his ironic philosophy of life. He mused, —

"So I had to get into a fight in 'Frisco and come here to work on this job to find out my family connections."

He seemed impressed with the devious paths of Providence.

"And I had to go all the way from Alton to Paris to find a Californian husband, who brought me out here!" laughed Adelle, who was beginning to comprehend the mason's humor and the situation.

Neither thought of any money concern in the newfound relationship. They were still sitting before the shack on boxes in the red light of the descending sun and Clark was explaining to "cousin" his theory of the unimportance of family ties, when Archie came up the path. Adelle perceived him first, and hastily getting up went to meet him. She did not want him to hear the news, at least not until she had had time

to manage his susceptibilities, for she knew that his first reaction would be to get rid of her "cousin" as soon as possible, and he would nag her until the mason had been discharged. Archie, who had been drinking enough since his game to give free rein to his poor temper, immediately began the attack within hearing of the stone mason.

"So this is where you are! I've been looking for you all over the place. Thought you were too tired to go to the polo," he said accusingly.

"I only just came up the hill for a little walk," Adelle explained.

"I've been back an hour myself, and they said you'd gone out before," her husband retorted suspiciously.

"Perhaps it was earlier," Adelle replied indifferently.

She cared less than she had once for Archie's outbursts of temper, and at present her mind was occupied with other matters than calming him. Archie looked at her with a peculiar stare in which ugliness and something more evil were mixed.

"Been having such an interesting conversation that you did n't know how fast time was going?" he sneered.

"Yes," Adelle replied literally.

"Talkin' with that fellow?" Archie demanded, hitching a shoulder in the direction of the stone mason, who was still sitting not far off watching the couple.

"Yes, I had something important to say to him," Adelle replied, and started away.

But Archie did not stir.

"I have something important to say to him, too," he growled, walking towards the mason.

"Archie!" Adelle called.

But Archie paid no attention. He strode furiously up to the shack, and even before he reached it he called out, —

"Here, you there! What business have you got building your dirty little roost on my land without permission?"

The mason merely smiled at the angry man in reply. Adelle, who had run up to her husband, tried to pull him back, with a hand on his arm.

"It isn't our land," she said disgustedly. Her foolish husband did not even know the boundaries of their own property, which stopped at the edge of the eucalyptus grove on the top of the hill.

"Well, I won't have him tracking up the place with his paths," Archie said weakly. "He was prowling around the house last night. I saw him."

The mason again smiled at him, as if he scorned to answer back a man who was so evidently "in his booze," as he would put it, and trying to pick a quarrel.

"Anyway you are discharged," he said, in a lordly attempt to get back his dignity. "See Mr. Ferguson in the morning and get your money and — get out!"

"I will not," the mason replied imperturbably.

"What do you say?"

Clark grinned at Adelle and replied with an intentional drawl, —

"I been discharged once on this job and taken back, and this time I mean to stick until the job's done."

"No, you won't!" Archie shouted.

"Oh, so I won't? . . . Well, I ain't taking my orders from you. She's the boss on the ranch, I guess."

He indicated Adelle with a nod. This came altogether too near the truth to be pleasant for Archie.

"You damned —"

With his heavy polo whip raised he sprang at the mason. Adelle dragged at his arm, and he turned to shake her off, raising his free hand threateningly.

"Take care!" the mason called out. "Don't hit a woman!"

As if in defiance, as if to show that he could hit at least this woman who belonged to him by law, even though her possessions might not belong to him entirely, Archie's left hand came down upon Adelle's arm with sufficient force to be called a blow. Adelle dropped her grip of her husband's arm with a slight cry of fright and shame rather than of pain. Archie did not have to step forward to get at the mason, for with one bound Clark sprang from his seat on the box and dealt Archie such a smashing blow in the middle of the face that he fell crumpled

in a heap on the ground between Adelle and the mason. He lay there gasping and groaning for a few moments — long enough for Adelle to realize completely how she loathed him. Before this she had known that she was not happy in her marriage, that Archie was far from the lover she had dreamed of, that he was lacking in certain common virtues very necessary in any society. Indeed, he had treated her roughly before now, in accesses of alcoholic irritation, but always there had been in her mind a lingering affection for the boy she had once loved and spoiled — enough to make her pardon and forget. But now she saw him beneath the skin with the deadly clearness of vision that precludes all forgiveness.

At last Archie crawled giddily to his feet, his nose running with blood which spattered over his rumpled silk shirt. He looked at his opponent uncertainly, as if he would like to try conclusions again, but a glance at the mason's large hard hands and stocky frame was enough. Turning, he said, — "I'll fix you for this," and started for Highcourt.

"Oh, go to hell!" the mason called after him, resuming his seat on the soap-box and relighting his pipe.

Adelle, before she followed her husband, said to her new-found cousin in a tone clear enough to reach Archie's ears, —

"Of course you are not discharged. I am very sorry for this."

"That's all right," the mason replied. "I don't worry about him."

Archie kept on as if he had not heard, and Adelle followed back to Highcourt at sufficient distance not to be forced to speak to him. They did not meet or speak that night, which had happened before more than once. Adelle lay awake far into the night, thinking many surprisingly new thoughts — about the cousin in his shack, the way in which he had taken her news of their relationship, and also the calm manner in which he had stood her husband's outrageous behavior. She as nearly admired the cold humor with which he received her husband's abuse until Archie had struck her as she did anything she knew in the way of conduct. The mason cousin might use bad grammar and chew tobacco and go on sprees occasionally, but as between him and her husband he was the gentleman of the two — better still, the man of the two. His patience under insult and his treating Archie like a child when he saw that the "gentleman" had been drinking were truly admirable!

As for Archie it was not a new experience for her latterly to lie awake cogitating her marriage in unhappy sleeplessness. It had seemed to her on such occasions that all the old banker's predictions about the results of her marrying Archie had come true like a curse, and sooner than might have been thought. But never before had she seen so clearly how impossible Archie was, never before felt herself

without one atom of regard for him — not even desire. And yet her mind was too little fertile in expedients to suggest to her any way out of her trouble. She was of those many women who will not take a step even against the most brutal of husbands until driven into it. So she quickly dismissed him from her thoughts.

It was then that for the first time, in connection with her new cousin, she thought of the money — the buried treasure of Clark's Field, which had been discovered for her benefit and which had been of such poor use to her apparently. Archie, she had said to herself, was less of a man than this rough stone mason, Tom Clark. He was, after all, nothing more than a very ordinary American citizen, with the prestige and power of her wealth. If that other man had happened to have the money — and it was here that light broke over her. It did belong to him, at least a large part of it! She recalled now the substance of those legal lectures she had received at different times from the officers of the trust company. The trouble about Clark's Field all these years had been the disappearance of an heir, the elder brother of her grandfather, and the lack of absolute proof that he had left no heirs behind him when he died, to claim his undivided half interest in the field. But he had left heirs, a whole family of them, it seemed! And to them, of course, belonged at least a half of the property quite as much as it did to her!

When she had arrived at this illumination she was

in a great state of excitement. She almost waked Archie from his alcoholic slumbers in the neighboring room to tell him that he was not married to a rich woman — at least to one as rich as he thought by a half. And the workman whom he had insulted and discharged in his fury was really his superior, in money as well as character, and might perhaps drive him out of Highcourt, instead! But she decided to put off this ironical blow until a more opportune time, when Archie was nagging her for money. He could be too disagreeable in his present state.

Then she thought of breaking the astounding news to the stone mason himself. She must do that the first thing in the morning. But presently doubts began to rise in her mind. Of course, knowing nothing of law, she resolved the problem by the very simple rules of thumb she was capable of. These California Clarks, of whom the mason was one, undoubtedly owned a half of Clark's Field, — in other words, of her estate, — for Clark's Field had been sold for the most part and no longer belonged to her. If so there would be only one half left for her and her child, and she had good reason to fear that her half had considerably shrunken by now, thanks to Archie's investments and their way of living, if it had not wholly disappeared! What then? She would be poor, as poor as Tom Clark was now. And it would all go to him — the thought made her smile. But no, he had brothers and sisters, probably

uncles and aunts and cousins. He would have to share his half with them. And one of his sisters was the sort of woman she had been taught to despise and abhor. It was all a horrible tangle, which she felt herself incapable to see through at once. She was not sure that she could tell Archie or even her new cousin, anyway not until she had thought it out more clearly and knew the case in all its bearings.

The truth was, perhaps, that Adelle's natural fund of egotism, which was not small, had begun to work as soon as she realized that she might lose her magic lamp altogether. It may be doubted that, if certain events had not happened, Adelle ever would have risen to the point where she could have told any one the truth as she was now convinced she knew it. For the present she would put it off, — a few days. It was so much easier to say nothing at all: the mason did not seem to suspect the truth. She could let things go on as fate had shaped them thus far.

And there was her little boy, too, who was very precious to her. She would be disinheriting him, which she had no right to do. It was all horribly mixed up! Adelle did not get much sleep that night.

XXXIX

ALTHOUGH she had made up her mind not to tell her secret to any one at present, Adelle could not refrain from looking up the stone mason the first thing in the morning. She seemed to be attracted to him as the moth is to the proverbial flame, all the more after her new understanding of the situation between them. And she was also apprehensive of what Archie might be up to. If he were violent, and the two men had another quarrel, she might be forced to declare the truth, which she did n't want to do this morning.

Therefore, she felt relieved to find that Tom Clark was not at his post on the wall. She asked no questions of Mr. Ferguson. And morning after morning she was both disappointed and relieved when she went to the wall and found his place still empty. The foreman had not put other masons to work there, but continued the work at a different point. She asked him no questions. Perhaps her cousin had left voluntarily in disgust with Highcourt. She even went up the hill one morning and found his little shack closed. Peeking through the windows she perceived his trunk and kitty-bag in their place, with his old shoes and clothes beside them. So he intended to come back! Again she was both pleased

and frightened. The return would mean complications. She must make up her mind definitely whether she should tell him the secret. She felt a strong impulse to do so and take the consequences. And there was Archie, with whom she had not exchanged a dozen words since the scene on the hill. It was quite the longest quarrel that they had ever had and wearing to them both. So it went for nearly a week.

And then one morning, as she was passing heedlessly along the terrace, she heard a man's voice which was familiar, and peering over the great wall, saw Tom Clark below at his accustomed post. He caught sight of the mistress of Highcourt, and bobbed his head shamefacedly. After a time she came to him through the cañon, but he pretended not to see her. She knew that he was ashamed of himself for something he had done — she wondered what — probably drinking. He looked a trifle paler than usual and very red-eyed. He acted like a puppy that knows perfectly well it has been up to mischief and deserves a licking, wishes, indeed, that its master would go to it and get it over soon so that they could come back to the old normal friendship. Adelle herself felt cold with excitement of all sorts, and could hardly control her voice enough to say unconcernedly, —

"Have n't seen you, Mr. Clark, for some time."

"No!" (Head down.) "Just thought I'd take a little vacation — and rest up."

"Did you go up to San Francisco?"

"Yep!"

"Did you see another opera?"

"There were n't no opera this trip," the mason replied, spitting out his quid. "I — seed — other things."

"Is that so — what?"

The mason did not reply, but there was a reckless gleam in his blue eyes. He worked vigorously, then volunteered evasively, —

"I was just celebratin' around."

"Celebrating what?"

"Things in general — what you was tellin' me about our bein' cousins," he said, with a touch of his usual humor.

"Oh!" Adelle replied, discomposed. He had been thinking about it, then.

"Thought it deserved some celebratin'," Clark added.

Adelle's heart beat a little faster. If he only knew the whole truth! — then there would be something to celebrate, indeed!

"The strike's off," the mason remarked soon, as if he were anxious to get away from his own misdeeds.

"Is it?"

"Yep! They made a compromise — that's what they call it when the fellers on top get together and deal it out so the men lose."

"I suppose, then, you will be going back to the city when you finish the work here?" Adelle asked.

"Maybe — I dunno — got some money comin'

to me" — Adelle's guilty heart stood quite still. "I ain't drawed a cent on this job so far," he added to her relief. "Perhaps I'll blow in what's coming to me in goin' East to see where my folks used to live in Alton."

He spoke half in jest, but Adelle replied faintly, —

"That might be a good idea."

"I heard from one of my sisters while I was gone. She's in Philadelphy — married to a feller there that works in the carpet mills. I ain't seen her for more'n ten years — might stop in Philadelphy, too."

Adelle was curious to know whether this was the sister who "had gone wrong," but did not know how to phrase the question. After a time, she felt the temptation to tell the mason what she knew becoming intolerable. Her mind hovered about her secret as a bird hovers over a great void; she was irresistibly drawn to the fatal plunge. She moved off while she yet felt the power to do so without speaking. Her cousin looked up in some surprise.

"You goin'?" he asked.

"Let me know before you start East," she called back to him. "Perhaps I could do something to help you on your trip."

"Sure I'll let you know," came up heartily from the bottom of the wall where the mason had gone for a tool.

If Archie realized Tom Clark's return to High-

court, he was wise enough to make nothing of it. He was in a poor way nervously at this time, playing bad polo and drinking altogether too much. He stayed away from the city, which was a nuisance to Adelle, but he spent most of his time at the country club. Adelle meanwhile was wrestling with herself; with what people have the habit of calling the "conscience," but what had better be called the "consciousness," endeavoring to realize more fully the position in which she found herself. The idea within, like most ideas hotly nursed in a troubled brain, was growing all the time, until it filled all her waking moments and most of her dreams. She had to will deliberately not to take the little path up the hill to the mason's shack. Once she yielded, and when she arrived breathless, her heart thumping, she found the door safely padlocked. The mason had gone to the town for supplies. She sneaked back to Highcourt by a roundabout course through the eucalyptus wood, to avoid meeting her cousin on the path. Thus day by day she lived in an agony of preoccupation, so that even Archie began to notice how thin and pale she was, and attributed her distress to all sorts of reasons except the right one, of which he knew nothing. Her friends said that she was "trying to do too much," needed distraction, and recommended a trip somewhere, though what she did, except to dine and lunch out a few times each week or trail about the unfinished estate and play with her child, would be hard to say. Adelle, in truth, was thinking, thinking

harder than ever before in her life. Her new secret was the most stimulating influence, next to her child, that she had known in all her life. Her brain once started led her into all sorts of mad by-paths, ramifications of perception that she and the reader, too, might not suspect lay within her powers. She asked herself what the mason, with his ideas about the injustice of property, would do with her money? She began even to question the meaning of life! Its queer treatment of her, in jerking her up to a high plane of privilege and then throwing her down in this unexpected manner, appeared for the first time inexplicable.

But greatest of all triumphs from this thinking was that Adelle began to look upon life objectively, trying to see what it must mean to others — to her new cousin, who evidently had had his own ambitions, which had been thwarted by a fate that he could not surmount alone. Would he do better with the money than she had? Achieve happiness more lastingly? She began to doubt the power of money to give happiness. She was losing faith in magic lamps. Of course, if Adelle had profited by her Puritan ancestry, she would have known that all this kind of reasoning was useless; for she had no business to assume the part of Providence to the stone mason and deprive him of his own choice in the matter of the inheritance. But fortunately she was not given to the picking of moral bones. She said to herself positively that Tom Clark, whatever he might once have

become under other conditions, would not know now what to do with money: he would merely "get into trouble with it," as Archie had got into trouble. Already he had the habit of going off on "vacations" like the past week, for which he seemed ashamed.

And there were other lives than his to be considered — hers and Archie's, though she did not give much thought to them. But there was her boy's future. He had been Adelle's other great education. She had studied him from the hour he was born and noted each tiny, trivial development of his character. Already she knew that he was gay and pleasure-loving by nature — had a curling, sensuous lip much like his father's. She felt that he would need a great deal of guidance and care if he were to arrive safely at man's estate. Of course, it was often said that the struggle of poverty was the way of salvation. But she was not convinced of this heroic creed. All the more if the little fellow should really develop weakness; for wealth covered up and prevented the more dreadful aspects of incompetence. No, she could never bring herself to deprive her boy of his inheritance. She thought that this was the deciding consideration in her resolve finally to keep her secret to herself. It was a large reason, no doubt. But the decision came rather from her old habit of letting fate work with her as it would; that passive acceptance of whatever happened which had always been her characteristic attitude towards life. She had an almost superstitious shrinking from interfering with

this outside arrangement of destiny. For where she had interfered — as in getting Archie — she had brought disaster upon herself. It was always the safer and wiser part for a woman to do nothing until she was compelled to act. This conviction of Adelle's may seem to our modernly strenuous natures to evince the last degree of cowardice and pusillanimity before life. We like to believe that we are changing our destiny every day and "making character" through a multitude of petty decisions. As a matter of cold examination, it would probably be found that few of us, through all our momentous and character-forming decisions, affect the stream of life as much as we like to think, or mould character. The difference between Adelle and the strenuous type of constantly willing woman lies more in the consciousness of fuss and effort that the latter has. When it came to the necessary point Adelle, as we have seen, made her own decisions and abided by them, which is more than the strenuous always do.

At one time, in the course of the long debate with herself, Adelle felt that she must appeal to some one for advice. In such stress and perplexity a woman usually appeals to priest or doctor, or both. But Adelle was entirely without any religious connection, and she had no doctor in whom she trusted. Instead, she thought of the Washington Trust Company, which had been the nearest thing to parental authority she had ever known, but rejected the idea of presenting to them this delicate problem. The

thing, she saw, was beyond their scope and jurisdiction. The only person she instinctively turned towards for advice was the old probate judge, who had given her such a lecture on Clark's Field for a benediction when she last appeared before him. She felt that he would understand, and that he would have the right idea of what ought to be done. . . .

Possibly, as the days passed and her mind grew still more towards comprehension, she would have consulted Judge Orcutt, although she hated to write letters. She might even have crossed the continent to talk with the judge. But again Fate took the matter out of her hands and resolved it in other ways.

XL

THAT Saturday night there was a large dinner-party at Highcourt in celebration of some polo match, where the local team was gloriously vanquished. Archie was eager to gather people around him, all the more as his drinking and his mistakes in "investments" had lowered his prestige in the "colony." Why had they gone to the expense and the bother of this big establishment, he argued, if they were not to entertain, and entertain in a large and lavish fashion? This was the first of a series of dinners he had planned to give. If the invitations had not been sent long before, Adelle would never have had the party, for with the strained relations between herself and her husband, social life was more difficult than ever to her. Adelle was never a brilliant hostess. She talked little and with effort, and people herded together in large numbers rendered her quite dumb. This evening she was more distrait than ever, for her mind clung tenaciously to its one theme as was the habit of her mind. It would stick to an idea until some solution presented itself. No mere distraction could shunt it off its course, as with Archie, who drank and gambled and played polo and shouted and laughed in order not to think of the many disagreeable things there were to think about when he allowed himself to lapse into a sober mood.

Even Major Pound, who sat at his hostess's right, noticed after a time Adelle's preoccupation, although he could be trusted to monologize egotistically by the half-hour. He had started zestfully on the building trades in San Francisco. The settlement of the long strike did not seem to please him any more than it had Tom Clark. He thought that the "tyranny of labor" was altogether unsupportable, that this country was fast sinking into the horrors of "socialism," and capital was already winging its way in fear to other safer refuges. Adelle had heard all this many times not only from Major Pound and Nelson Carhart, but from George Pointer and the other men she saw. It was the only kind of "serious" conversation they ever indulged in. To-night, although she heard the familiar prophecies of ruin faintly, through the haze of her own problem, she had a distinct perception of the stupidity of it. What right had any man to talk in this bitter, doleful tone of his country and the life of the day? How could any man tell what the times were going to bring forth? Perhaps her anarchistic cousin — the stone mason who had considered these matters as he plied his trade under blistering heat or chilling winds — had arrived at as sane conclusions as this sleek, well-dressed, well-fed railroad man by her side. She recognized that life was mostly a bitter fight, and her sympathies were strangely not with her own class as represented by this gathering.

All day long a high north wind had been blowing,

one of those shrill winds from the snow-capped Sierras that bring drought to California and rasp the nerves like a steel whip. The wind had not gone down at sunset, as it often did, and even while they dined with a roaring wood fire in the great chimney-place, the noise of the wind could be heard as it streamed through the cañon, lashing the tall trees above the house. Adelle, listening to the uproar outside, wondered whether the tar-paper shack on the hillside, which must be directly in the path of the gale, had been able to withstand it. She thought of the mason sitting in his flimsy beaten room listening to the mouthings of the tempest, alone. He was not complaining, she felt. The tempest and the strife of life merely roused the ironic demon within him — to laugh sardonically, to laugh but fight on. . . .

"As I was saying," the major iterated to fix her wandering mind, and she stared at him. What difference did it make what he was saying! The polite major shifted his conversation from politics to art, with the urbanity of the good diner-out. Had she seen the work of the "futurists" when she was last in Paris. Really it was beyond belief! Another sign of the general degeneracy of the age — revolt from discipline, etc. But Adelle had nothing for the "futurists"; and finally Major Pound gave her up and turned to the lady on his right. Archie, whose restless eyes had seen the situation opposite him, cast his wife some sour looks. He himself was more boisterous than usual, as if to cover up the dumbness of his

wife. They were dining to-night the younger "polo" set for the most part, and the men and women of this set liked to make a great deal of noise, laughed boisterously at nothing, shouted at each other, sang at the table, and often drank more than was good for them. Archie ordered in the victrola, and between courses the couples "trotted," then a new amusement that had just reached the Coast.

When at last the company divided for coffee and smoking, Archie whispered to his wife snarlingly, —

"Can't you open your mouth?"

Adelle was insensible to his little dig, as she called it, and silently, mechanically went through with her petty task of hostess in the hall where the women sat, as the drawing-room was still in the hands of the decorators. All the fictitious gayety of the party died out as soon as the sexes separated. The women gathered in a little knot around the fireplaces to smoke and talked about the wind. It got on their nerves, they asserted querulously.

"It's the one thing I can't stand in California," a pretty little woman, who had recently taken up her residence on the Coast, remarked in a tone of personal grievance.

"We have had a great deal of north wind this year," another said.

Adelle made no comment. The weather never interested her. It was one of the large impersonal facts of life, outside her control, that she accepted without criticism. The men stayed away a long time

in Archie's "library" in the other wing, probably talking polo or business, and cosily enjoying their coffee, liqueurs, and cigars. Archie's cigars took a long time to smoke and the older men usually had two. The women were bored. Irene Pointer yawned openly in her corner by the fire. She and her old friend rarely exchanged remarks these days. Irene avoided Adelle, which Adelle was beginning to perceive. It was understood in the colony that Irene Pointer did not approve of the way in which Adelle "managed" her husband, and told her so. Irene herself was very discreet, and "managed" George Pointer admirably so that she had a great deal of freedom, and he was perfectly content.

At last the men drifted back and stood in a row before the blazing fire. Archie had in the victrola once more and tried to start them dancing, but the hall was too crowded with furniture and the drawing-room could not be used. He wanted to have the dining-room cleared, but there was a spirit of restlessness among the guests. They could not revive the gayety of the dinner-table. It was not long before the last motor had rolled down the drive. Archie came back into the hall from the door after speeding his guests and stood moodily staring at Adelle. He was vexed. The party had been a failure, — dull. And she knew that he thought her responsible for it. She expected an outburst, for Archie did not usually take any pains to control his feelings. She waited. She knew that if he spoke she should say something

this time. She would probably regret it, but she might even tell him her secret, as the easiest way to crush him utterly. She looked at him, a dangerous light in her gray eyes.

This was the man she had craved so utterly that she had run every risk to possess him! Irene had called him "a bounder"; and now he was "going too far" with Irene—not that she especially cared about that, either. But all his arrogance, his folly, his idleness and futility were built upon her fortune, which really did not belong to her after all. A cruel desire to see him crumble entered her heart, and she knew that she should tell him the truth if he attacked her as she expected.

But this one time Archie refrained from expressing himself. Even in his flustered state he recognized a peculiar danger signal in the stare of his passive wife. With a gesture of disgust he lounged out of the hall in the direction of his library. Adelle watched him go. Should she follow him in there and deal her blow? She heard the door of the large drawing-room open and close behind him. She knew that he would keep on drinking by himself until he felt properly sleepy. She did not follow him. Instead, she went upstairs to the rooms occupied by her child and his nurse, as she did every night before going to bed. The little fellow was lying at full length on his small bed. His hands were clenched; his arms stretched out above his head; his face had an expression of effort, as if in his dreams he were putting forth all

his tiny might to accomplish something. He looked very handsome. Except for that weak curve to the pleasure-loving lips, he resembled neither Archie nor Adelle. Nature seemingly had been dissatisfied with them both, and in drawing new life from them had chosen to return along the line of their ancestry to select a more promising mould than either of the parents. The fact that this could be so — that the child from her womb might be more than herself or Archie — thrilled Adelle. "Boy" as she called him was mystery and religion to her. He was to become the unfulfilled dream of her life. This one perfect thing had been given her out of the accidents of her disordered life, and she must make the utmost of it.

She covered him up where in his dream he had kicked himself free from the blanket. She bent and kissed him on the forehead gently not to awaken him. He rolled over, settled himself into an easier position, and the tension of his small face relaxed. Instead of the frown of effort a beautiful smile broke over his face, as if at the touch of his mother's lips the character of his dreams had changed to something highly pleasurable. Adelle's eyes filled with unaccustomed tears, and she lingered there a few moments. Nothing was too much to do for him, to bear for him, no sacrifice that she might make for his future! It was settled. She should never speak to any one of what she knew. "Boy" should have everything she could give him, all that was left of her magic lamp.

Even Archie could never exasperate her again enough to endanger the child's future.

She turned down the night-light and tiptoed out of the room. To-morrow she would move up here, even if she had to put the nurse in some other place, and henceforth she would never be separated from her child. He should stand between her and his father. She went to her rooms on the lower floor, but before undressing she stepped out on the broad terrace, which was now almost ready for the sod. The great wall was all but finished — the corner by the orangery to be built up even with the rest. As she came out from the shelter of the house the blast of wind caught her thin dress and swept it out before her like a streamer. She had to hold her hair to prevent the wind from unwinding it. She could see nothing — the impalpable blackness reached far down into the depths of the cañon, far out into the space above the land and the sea. Usually even on dark nights the hill behind the house brooded over the place like a faint shadow, but to-night it was blotted out. The house was dark except for the light in Archie's library at the other end of the terrace and the faint candle gleam of the night-light in the nursery.

Adelle liked the black storm. It soothed her troubled mind by its sheer force, passing through her like the will of a stronger being. Adelle was growing, at last, after all these years of imperceptible change, of spiritual stagnation. She had begun

to grow with the coming of her child, and these last weeks she had been growing fast. She even realized that she was changing, was becoming another, unfamiliar person. She felt it to-night more than at any time in all her life — the strangeness of being somebody other than her familiar self. She said it was her "experiences." It was, indeed, familiarity with Archie and his disgusting weakness. It was her young cousin, the stone mason, and all that the discovery of him as a person, as well as her relationship to him and his claim upon her property, had meant. It was, of course, the influence of creative motherhood upon her. But it was more than all these combined that had started the belated growth of her soul, now that she was twenty-five, married, and had a child. It was an unknown power within her, like this mighty passionate wind, germinating late and unexpectedly in the thin soil of her mind, irresistibly taking possession of her and shaping her anew. Many would call it God. Adelle did not name the power.

This becoming another person was not especially pleasurable. It was perplexing and tragic as now. But Adelle was beginning to realize very dimly that she was not living for her own happiness, not even for the happiness of her child, wholly. She did not know why she was living. But she knew that life meant much more than the happiness of any one being or of many beings. It was like this high wind from the mountains and the deserts, rushing over the earth

with a fierce, compelling impulse—whither? Ah, that no one could say. One must bend before the blast, but not yield to it altogether — not be scattered fruitless by its careless hand. Adelle thus had come a long way from that girl who had run off with Archie to Paris: she knew it. And having come so far, who could say where she would finally end? . . . She pressed her body against the strong wind and felt it wrap her about like the firm embrace of a living being. The tempest calmed and strengthened her.

At last she went back to her room, undressed quickly, and got to bed. The last conscious thought that came to her was a resolve to look into her affairs herself at once and put an end to all the folly that she and Archie had committed with her money — to guard what was left for the use of her boy. For the rest, she should go on as she had begun, waiting always for the convincing urge of her destiny, proving her way step by step. She would not confide in any one what she knew about the lost heirs of Clark's Field.

XLI

AFTER a time Adelle became confusedly conscious of some disturbance around her. She thought at first that it must be Archie noisily entering the neighboring chamber. But soon she heard loud cries and sat upright, listening. Then she became aware of a thick, suffocating atmosphere and the acrid taste of smoke in her mouth. The electric light would not respond to her touch. She knew what it meant — Fire! With one bound she leaped from her bed and ran, just as she was in nightdress, for the hall from which the large staircase led up to the upper story — the only approach to her child's rooms from this end of the house. The staircase was a bank of roaring flame and the hall itself was vividly streaked with dashes of eating flame. She rushed chokingly straight for the blazing staircase and would have died in the fire had not one of the servants caught her in time and dragged her back outside through the open door. She quickly slipped through the man's grasp, and without uttering a cry started around the house for the servants' entrance. Archie came stumbling into the light, half dressed in his evening clothes, struggling to put an arm into one of the sleeves of his coat. She cried, —

"The boy — the boy — save him!"

One glance at Archie's nerveless, vacant face was enough. There was no help to be had in him!

"Dell—where is he?" Archie called, still fumbling for the lost sleeve. But she had disappeared.

At the servants' door some men were pounding and shouting. The door was locked and bolted and stood fast. Adelle threw herself against it, pounding with her fists; then, as if divining its unyielding strength, she sped on around the corner of the house to the open terrace. There a number of the servants and helpers on the estate were running to and fro shouting and calling for help. Already the fire gleamed through the house from the front and the wind lifted great plumes of flame against the dark hillside, painting the tall eucalyptus trees fantastically. The fire, starting evidently in the central part of the house which contained the drawing-room, had shot first up the broad staircase and was now eating its way through the second floor and reaching across to the farther wing that hung directly above the cañon. More and more persons arrived while Adelle ran up and down the terrace, like a hunted animal, moaning —"Boy! Boy!" There was talk of ladders, which had been left by the workmen at the garage half a mile away. Before these could be got or the hose attached to the fireplugs, the flame had swirled out from the lonely wing where the child and his nurse slept. Even if the ladders came, they would be of no use over the deep pit of the cañon, and the center of the house was now a roaring furnace. Adelle clung

to the rough rock of her great wall — the supporting wall to this part of her house — the wall she had watched with such interest, such admiration for its size and strength. It reached away from her slight, white figure down into the gloom of the cañon, and upon it rested the burning house. While she clung there dry-eyed, moaning, she was conscious of Archie's attempt to pull her back. He was the same bewildered figure, collarless, in evening clothes — the same feeble, useless man, failing her at this crisis as always. She shook off his touch with repugnance and crouched close to the wall, as near as she could get to her child.

Then there passed a few of those terrible moments that are as nothing and as a lifetime crowded with agony to the human being. The wind poured noisily through the cañon, bending before its blast the swaying trees, but even louder than the wind was the roar of the conquering fire that now illuminated all the hillside like day and revealed the little figures of impotent men and women, who ran this way and that confusedly, helplessly, crying and shouting. The center of the great house was a solid pillar of flame, and the fire was eating its way on either side into the wings. The wing where the child slept rose from the cañon like a walled castle, impregnable — Adelle might remember that "Boy" had chosen these rooms in the remote corner of the house, fascinated by their lofty perch over the deep cañon. And there, at the bottom of the wall that she had

built, the mother clung, helpless, beyond reach of her child.

A man ran out on the parapet of the terrace past Adelle. He stopped where the parapet touched the sheer wall of the building, looked up at the burning house which cast out great waves of heat, knocked off his shoes, threw down his coat, and dove as it seemed into space. She knew it was Clark, the stone mason. People crowded around Adelle and leaned over the parapet to see what had become of him. They shouted — "See him! There! There!" — pointing, as the wreaths of smoke rose and revealed the man's dark figure clinging to the wall, creeping forward, walking, as it were, on nothing in space. With fingers and toes he stuck himself like a leech to the broken surfaces of the rock wall, feeling for the cracks and crannies, the stone edgings, the little pockets in the masonry that he himself had laid. He climbed upwards in a zigzag, slowly, steadily, groping above his head for the next clutch, clinging, crawling like a spider over the surface of sheer rock. As he rose foot by foot he became clearly visible in the red light of the flames, a dark shadow stretched against the blank surface above the gulf. The Scotch foreman said, —

"He's crazy — he can't skin that wall!"

Adelle knew that he was speaking of the stone mason; she knew that Clark was daring the impossible to get at her child, to save her "Boy." She felt in every fiber of her body the strain of that feat —

the clinging, creeping progress up the perpendicular wall over the cañon. Those around groaned as they watched, expecting each moment to see the man's body fall backwards sickeningly into space.

But he stuck to the wall as if part of it, his arms widespread, his fingers feeling every inch for hold, and now he was mounting faster as if sure of himself, confident that he could cling. If he could keep hold until his hand touched the first row of window-sills, he had a chance. A long red arm reached up; groped painfully; the finger-tips touched the end of a blind. There was dead silence except for the roar of the wind-driven fire while the mason pawed along the window-sill for safe lodgment; then — "He's caught it!"

A shout went up, and while her breath seemed to choke her, Adelle saw the man in the glare of the flame pull himself up, inch by inch, until his head was level with the glass, butt his head against the heavy pane, and with a final heave disappear within while a black smudge of smoke poured from the vent he had made.

A long, silent, agonizing emptiness while he was gone, and he was back at the window, standing large and bloody in the light, his arms about the figure of the nurse, who had evidently fainted. Adelle felt one sharp pang of agony; — "Why had he taken her, not the child?" But her soul rejected this selfish thought; — "He knows," she said, "he knows — he must save her first!"

Clark had tied the sheets under the woman's shoulders, and holding the weight of the body with one hand, he crept lightly from one window ledge to the next until he came within reach of the terrace, then swung the woman and cast her loose. She fell in a heap beside Adelle. They said she was living.

Already the mason had groped his way back along the sills to the open window and disappeared. When he reappeared he had the small boy in his arms, evidently asleep or unconscious, for he lay a crumpled little bundle against the mason's breast. This time Clark continued his course along the sills until he reached a gutter, clinging with one hand, holding his burden tight with the other. It was a feat almost harder than the skinning of the naked wall. When he dropped the last ten feet to the ground cries rose from the little group below. It was the unconscious recognition of an achievement that not one man in ten thousand was capable of, a combination of courage, skill, and perfect nerve which let him walk safely above the abyss across the perpendicular wall. It was more than human, — the projection of man's will in reckless daring that defies the physical world.

Adelle always remembered receiving the child, who was still sleeping, she thought, from the mason's arms. Clark was breathing hard, and his face was slit across by a splinter from the window-pane. He was a terrible, ghastly figure. The blood ran down his bare arms and dripped on the white bundle he gave her. . . . Then she remembered no more until

she was in a bare, cold room — the place that was to have been the orangery, where they kept the garden tools. She was kneeling, still holding in her arms her precious bundle, calling coaxingly, — "Boy, wake up! Boy, it's mother! Boy, how can you sleep like that!" calling softly, piteously, moaningly, until she knew that her child could never answer her. He had been smothered by the smoke before the mason reached him. Then Adelle knew nothing more of that night and its horrors.

XLII

THERE is always the awakening, the coming back once more to consciousness, to the world that has been, and must endure, but will never again be as it was. Adelle woke to consciousness in the orangery, where they had laid mattresses for her and the dead child. Through the open door she might see the blackened walls of what had been Highcourt. The fire had swept clear through the three parts, scorching even the eucalyptus trees above on the hillside, and had died out at last for lack of food. The débris was now smouldering sullenly in the cloudless, windless day that had succeeded the storm. All the beauty of an early spring morning in California rioted outside, insulting the bereaved woman with its refreshment and joy. It was on mornings like this after a storm that Adelle loved the place most. She would take "Boy" and ramble through the fragrant paths. For then Nature, like a human being, having thrown off its evil mood, tries by caresses and sweet smiles to win favor again. . . .

Adelle lay there this golden morning, one arm around the little figure of her dead child, staring at the pool outside which was dappled with sunshine, at the ghastly wreck of her great house — not thinking, perhaps not even feeling acutely — aware merely

of living in a void, the shattered fragments of her old being all around her. How long she might have lain there one cannot tell: she felt that she should be like this always, numbed in the presence of life and light. They brought her food and clothes, and said things to her. Archie came in and sat down on one of the upturned flower-pots. He was fully dressed now, but still looked shaken, bewildered, a little cowed, as if he could not understand. At sight of him Adelle remembered the night, remembered the shaking, feeble figure of her husband, trying to get his arm into the sleeve of his dress-coat, useless before the tragedy, useless in the face of life. "What can I do!" he had whined then. Adelle could not then realize that she had made him as he was and should be merciful. She was filled with a physical loathing, a spiritual weariness of him, and turned her face to the wall so that she might not even see him.

"Adelle," he said. There was no reply. "Dell, dear," he began again, and put his hand coaxingly upon her shoulder.

She sat up, looking like a fierce animal, her hair tumbled about her neck and breasts, her pale face drawn and haggard. "Don't touch me — don't speak to me!" she whispered hoarsely. "Never again!"

She threw into those last words an intensity, a weight of meaning that startled even Archie, who whimpered out, — "It was n't my fault!"

Adelle neither knew nor cared then what had caused the fire. It was stupid of Archie to understand her so badly — she was not blaming him for the fire. She turned her face again to the wall, but suddenly, as if a light had struck through her blurred and blunted consciousness of the world, she called, —

"I want to see him — Clark, the mason; — tell him to come here to see me!"

Archie, crestfallen, sneaked out of the orangery on her errand. After a time he returned with the young mason, who stumbled into the dark room. Clark was washed and his cut had been bandaged, but he showed the terrible strain of those few minutes on the wall. His face twitched and his large hands opened and closed nervously. He looked pityingly at Adelle and mumbled, —

"Sorry I was too late!"

That was all. Adelle made a gesture as if to say that it was useless to use words over it. She did not thank him. She looked at him out of her gray eyes, now miserable with pain. She felt a great relief at seeing him, a curious return of her old interest in his simple, native strength and nerve, his personality. It made her feel more like herself to have him there and to know that he was sorry for her. After one or two attempts to find her voice she said clearly, —

"I must tell you something. . . . I thought of telling you about it before, but I could n't. I thought there were reasons not to. But now I must tell you before you go."

"Don't trouble yourself now, ma'am," the mason said gently. "I guess it'll keep until you're feelin' stronger."

"No, no, I can't wait. I must tell you now!" She raised herself with effort and leaned her thin face upon her hands. "I want him" — she pointed to Archie — "to hear it, too."

Then she tried again to collect her mind, to phrase what she had to say in the clearest possible way.

"Half of my money belongs to you, Mr. Clark."

The two men must have thought that her reason had left her after the terrible night, but she soon made her meaning clear.

"I did n't know it until a little while ago when I found out from those letters who you were. Not even then, just afterwards. Clark's Field was left to your grandfather and mine together, and somehow I got the whole of it — I mean I did from my mother and uncle. The lawyers can tell you all about it. Only it's really half yours — half of all there was!"

Archie now began to comprehend that his wife referred to the old legal difficulty over the title to Clark's Field, and interposed.

"You'd better wait, dear, until you are stronger before you try to think about business."

But Adelle utterly ignored him, as she was to do henceforth, and addressed herself singly to her cousin.

"I always thought it was all mine — they said it was. And when I knew about you, I did n't want to

give it up; there is n't as much as there was because he has lost a good deal. But that makes no difference. Half of the whole belongs to you and your brothers and sisters. I'll see that you get it. That's all!"

She lay back exhausted.

The mason remarked, —

"It's rather surprising. But I guess it can wait. It's waited a good many years."

And after standing by her side and looking down on her dumb, colorless face a while longer, he left the room.

Archie, who was clearly mystified by his wife's brief statement, concluded to regard it all as an aberration, an effort on her part to express fantastically her sense of obligation to the stone mason who had risked his life to save the child. He was concerned to have Adelle moved to a more comfortable place and told her that friends were coming to take her to their home. She made a dissenting gesture without opening her eyes. She wished to be left alone, entirely alone, here in the orangery whither she had taken her dead child the night before. Archie, seeing that he could not persuade her immediately to leave the cheerless spot, spoke of other things. He was voluble about the cause of the fire, hinting at a dire "anarchistic" plot of some discharged workingmen. There was much talk in their neighborhood at this time of the efforts of "anarchists" to destroy rich people's property by incen-

diary fires. Adelle, with her face turned to the wall, moaned, —

"Go away!"

And at last Archie went.

XLIII

ARCHIE was voluble about this non-essential in face of the personal tragedy, anxious to state his theory of the disaster, because he had more than an uncomfortable consciousness of what the servants and the men on the place were saying about it. And that was that the master himself had set the house on fire. It had started in the large, empty drawing-room, in which the decorators had been still working with paints, oils, and inflammable stuff. The workmen, however, had not been in the room for hours before the fire started. The only person who had entered it during the evening was Archie himself, for it was on his way from his library to his suite of rooms in the other wing. He had sat up late as usual after the guests had gone, smoking and drinking by himself, then had stumbled drowsily through the house to his bedroom, and on the way doubtless had dropped a match or lighted cigar in the drawing-room, and in his fuddled condition had failed to notice what he had done.

The first person to discover the fire had happened to be Tom Clark, who had been returning late from the village to his shack on the hill, and had seen an unnatural glow through the long French windows of the drawing-room. By the time he had roused the

house servants in their remote quarters and set off for the garage to summon help, the drawing-room and the adjoining hall were a mass of flame. When he returned with the new hose-cart and helpers the servants had already opened the large front door, admitting the wind, which blew the fire through the stairway like a bellows and completed the destruction of the house. Clark knew as well as Ferguson, the superintendent, and a half-dozen others, that when Archie emerged from his rooms on the ground floor, he was not fully undressed: though it was past one in the morning, he had not yet gone to bed. And although no one said anything, habitually cautious as such people usually are when indiscretion may involve them with their masters, they had easily made the correct deductions about the cause of the fire. . . .

When Archie came from the orangery, he saw Clark standing on the terrace beside the ruins, examining the scene of his already famous exploit of the night before. He may well have been wondering how he had ever succeeded in keeping his balance and in crawling like a fly over the surface of the wall he had helped to put up. There were a number of other people loitering about the ruins, some of them from neighboring estates, who had motored over to offer help and lingered to discuss the disaster. Archie joined a group of these, among whom was the stone mason. He was feeling unhappy about many things, especially about his responsibility for the

fire. He began to talk out his theory, turning first to Clark.

"You did n't happen to see any of the men hanging about the place when you came up last night?" he asked.

"No," the mason replied shortly.

"I thought maybe those Italians might have been sneaking about here. They're ugly fellows," Archie remarked.

"I did n't see nobody around."

"Some of those fellows are regular anarchists," Archie persisted. "They would n't stop at firing a house to get even with a man they're down on."

The mason stared at him out of his steely blue eyes, but said nothing. He began to understand what Archie was driving at, and a deep disgust for the man before him, who was trying to "put over" this cheap falsehood to "save his face," filled the mason's soul. The others had instinctively drawn away from them, and Clark himself looked as if he wanted to turn on his heel. But he listened.

"I should n't be surprised if the house had been set on fire," Archie continued confidentially. "I'm going to have detectives look into it. It must have been either that or spontaneous combustion in the drawing-room."

The mason's lips twitched ominously.

"But I think it was set on purpose!" Archie asserted.

"Oh, go to hell!" the mason groaned, his emotions

getting the better of him. "Set, nothing! . . . Spontaneous combustion! You know how it got on fire better than anybody."

"What do you mean?" Archie demanded.

But the mason strode away from him around the corner of the wall and disappeared. Archie followed him with his eyes, dazed and scowling. He had never liked the fellow, and resented the fact that he had been the hero of the disaster, while he himself, as he was well enough aware, had presented a sorry figure. Now this common workman had insulted him a second time, treated him as though he were dirt, dared even to make dastardly insinuations. Across Archie's miserable mind came Adelle's confused words about her property belonging to the stone mason — a half of it. He had explained this at the time as due to the shock and a woman's sentimental feeling of gratitude, but now he began to give it another and more sinister interpretation. What had she been doing up at this fellow's shack that afternoon? It hardly seemed possible, but unfortunately in Archie's set, even among the very best people socially of Bellevue, almost anything in the way of sex aberration was possible. He started back for the orangery, but before he got there he realized that it would be just as well not to approach his wife at this time with what he had in mind. Lying there with her dead child in her arms she had the air of a wounded wild animal that might be aroused to a dangerous fury. He had the sense to see that even

if his worst suspicions were justified, it was hardly the moment to exact his social rights.

So he wandered back to the ruin of Highcourt, where he found condoling friends, who took him off to the country club and kept him there, and it is to be feared provided him with his usual consolation for the manifold contrarieties of life, even for the very rich.

XLIV

In due time Adelle roused herself and took direction of affairs. She went down to the manager's cottage near the gate of Highcourt and thither brought the body of her child. From this cottage the little boy was buried on the next day. Adelle directed that the grave should be prepared among the tall eucalyptus trees on the hillside behind the ruins — there where she had often played with the little fellow. She herself carried the body to its small grave and laid it tenderly away in the earth, being the only one to touch it since the mason had first put it lifeless in her arms. Then she scattered the first dirt upon the still figure and turned away only when the flowers had been heaped high over the little grave. Archie was there and a few of their friends from Bellevue, as well as a group of servants, by whom Adelle had always been liked; and among the latter was the stone mason. Adelle did not seem to notice any one, and when all was over she walked off alone to the manager's cottage.

Observing his wife's tragic calm, her bloodless face, Archie might well have forgotten his suspicions and refrained from attacking her, as he had meant to. But he never had the opportunity to attack her. In some way Adelle conveyed to him that all was

at an end between them, and made it so plain that even Archie was forced to accept it as a fact for the time being. He never saw Adelle again after the brief service at the hillside grave.

Such a conclusion was inevitable: it came to Adelle without debate or struggle of any sort. A tragedy such as theirs, common to man and woman, either knits the two indissolubly together as nothing else can, or marks the complete cessation of all relationship. In their case they had nothing now, absolutely, to cement together. And Adelle was dimly conscious that she had before her pressing duties to perform in which Archie would be a mere drag.

For the present Archie went to the club to live, crestfallen, but unbelieving that his little gilded world had come to an end for good in this summary fashion. After a few attempts to get an interview with his wife, and learning finally that she had left the neighborhood, he drifted up to the city, for he found Bellevue less congenial than it had been, with all the talk about the Davises' affairs that was rife. His true performances the night of the fire had leaked out in a somewhat exaggerated form and even his pleasure-loving associates found him "too yellow." Oddly enough, Adelle, who had been thought generally "cold" and "stupid," "no addition to the colony," came in for a good deal of belated praise for her "strong character," and there was much sympathy expressed for her tragedy. Thus the

world revises its hasty judgments with other equally hasty ones, remaining always helplessly in error whether it thinks well or ill of its neighbors!

For a number of days after the burial of her child, Adelle remained at the manager's cottage in a state of complete passivity, scarcely making even a physical exertion. She did not cry. She did not talk. She neither writhed nor moaned in her pain. She was making no effort to control her feelings: she did not play the stoic or the Christian. Actually she did not feel: she was numb in body and soul. This hebetude of all faculty was the merciful, protecting method that Nature took with her, dimming the lamp of consciousness until the wounded creature could gain sufficient resiliency to bear a full realization of life. The pain would come, months and years hence, bitter, aching pain; but then she would be able to bear it.

Each day she went to the grave on the hillside, and carefully ordered the planting of the place so that it should be surrounded with flowers that she liked. Also she laid out a little shrub-bordered path to be made from the pool beside the orangery to the hillside. In these ways she displayed her concrete habit of thought. For the rest she sat or lay upon her bed, seeing nothing, probably thinking very little. It was a form of torpor, and after it had continued for a week or ten days, her maid was for sending for a doctor. That functionary merely

talked platitudes that Adelle neither understood nor heeded. The maid would have tried a priest, but feared to suggest it to her mistress.

The truth was that Adelle was recovering very slowly from her shock. She was only twenty-five and strong. Her body held many years of activity, possibly other children, and her mind still awaited its full development. How that would come was the really vital matter. The ordinary result would be that, after the full period of lethargy and physical and mental recuperation, Adelle should drift back into something like the same life she had previously led. She would go abroad and establish herself in a new environment, gradually acquiring new associations that in time would efface the more poignant surfaces of her tragedy at Highcourt. She would probably marry again, for she was still a young woman and had a considerable remnant of her fortune. She might reasonably expect more children to come to her, and thus, with certain modifications due to her experiences with Archie, live out an average life of ease and personal interests in the manner of that class that the probate court and the laws of our civilization had made it possible for her to join.

But all that conventional resolution of her destiny was not to be because of ideas already at work within her — the sole vital remains from her previous life. Even in her dullest moments of physical and mental hebetude she felt something pressing upon her from within for accomplishment, like a

piece of unfinished business that she must presently rouse herself to put through. She scarcely knew what it was until she made an effort to think it out, and for days she did not make this effort.

Gradually she focussed more concretely this unconscious weight upon her soul. It had to do with the stone mason and his rights to his grandfather's inheritance. She must see him before he left the country and come to a final understanding about it all. She wanted, anyway, to see him more than anybody else. He seemed to her in her dark hour the healthiest and most natural person she knew — most nearly on her own level of understanding, the one who really knew all about her and what her boy's death meant to her. But she was still too utterly will-less to bring about an interview between herself and her cousin either by sending for him or going up to the shack to find him.

Finally, after ten days of this semi-conscious existence, she awoke one morning with a definite purpose stirring at the roots of her being, and instead of returning from her child's grave as before she kept on up over the brow of the hill to the open field. The sight of the large sweep of earth and ocean and sky on this clear April morning was the first sensation of returning life that came to her. She stood for some time contemplating the scene, which glowed with that peculiar intense light, like vivid illumination, that is characteristic of California. The world seemed to her this morning a very big place and

lonely — largely untried, unexplored by her, for all her moving about in it and tasting its sweets. In this mood she proceeded to the little tar-paper shack. She feared to find it empty, to discover that the mason had gone to the city, in which case she should have to follow him and go to the trouble of hunting him up.

But he had not yet left, although his belongings were neatly packed in his trunk and kitty-bag. He was fussing about the stove, whistling to himself as he prepared a bird which he had shot that morning for his dinner. He had on his town clothes, which made him slightly unfamiliar in appearance. She knew him in khaki and flannel shirt, with bare arms and neck. He looked rougher in conventional dress than in his workingman's clothes.

At sight of Adelle standing in the doorway, the mason laid down his frying-pan and stopped whistling. Without greeting he hastily took up the only chair he had and placed it in the shade of the pepper tree in front of the shack. Adelle sat down with a wan little smile of thanks.

"I'm glad you had n't gone," she said.

"I ain't been in any particular hurry," her cousin answered. "Been huntin' some down in the woods," he added, nodding westward. He sat on the doorsill and picked up a twig to chew.

"I've been wanting to talk to you about that matter I told you of the morning after the fire."

The mason nodded quickly.

"I don't know yet what should be done about the property," she went on directly. "I must see some lawyer, I suppose. But it's just what I told you, I'm sure. Half of Clark's Field belonged to your grandfather and half to mine, and I have had the whole of it because they could n't find your family."

The mason listened gravely, his bright blue eyes unfathomable. He had had ample time, naturally, to think over the astounding communication Adelle had made to him, though he had come to no clear comprehension of it. A poor man, who for years has longed with all the force of his being for some of the privilege and freedom of wealth, could not be told that a large fortune was rightfully his without rousing scintillating lights in his hungry soul.

"There is n't all the money there was when I got it," Adelle continued. "We have spent a lot of money — I don't know just how much there is left. But there must be at least a half of it — what belongs to you!"

"Are you sure about this?" the mason demanded, frowning, a slight tremor in his voice; "about its belonging to father's folks? I never heard any one say there was money in the family."

"There was n't anything but the land — Clark's Field," Adelle explained. "It was just a farm in grandfather's time, and nothing was done with it for a long time. It was like that when I was a girl and living in Alton. It's only recently it has become so valuable."

"You did n't say nothin' about any property the first time we talked about our being related," the mason observed.

"I know," Adelle replied, with a sad little smile. Then she blurted out the truth, — "I knew it — not then, but afterwards. But I did n't tell you — I wanted to — but I meant never to tell. I meant to keep it all for myself and for him — my boy."

The mason nodded understandingly, while Adelle tried to explain her ruthless decision.

"You 'd never had money and did n't know about the Field. And it seemed wrong to take it all away from him — it was n't his fault, and I did n't want him to grow up poor and have to fight for a living," she explained bravely, displaying all the petty consideration she had given to her problem. Then she added with a sob — "Now it 's all different! He was taken away," she said slowly, using the fatalistic formula which generations of religious superstition have engraved in human hearts. "He will not need it!"

There was silence. Then unconsciously, as if uttered by another person, came from her the awful judgment, — "Perhaps that was why he was taken — because I would n't tell about the money."

"It ain't so!" the mason retorted hastily, with a healthy reaction against this terrible creed of his ancestors. "It had nothin' to do with your actions, with you, his being smothered in the fire — don't you go worryin' 'bout that!"

In his dislike of the doctrine and his desire to deal generously with the woman, the mason was not wholly right, and later Adelle was to perceive this. For if she had not been such as she was she would not have willfully taken to herself such a disastrous person as Archie and thus planted the seed of tragedy in her life as in her womb. If human beings are responsible for anything in their lives, she was responsible for Archie, which sometime she must recognize.

"You don't think so?" Adelle mused, somewhat relieved. After a little time she came safely back to sound earth as was her wont, — "Anyway, it's all different now. I don't want to keep the money. It is n't mine — it never was; never really belonged to me. Perhaps that was why I spent it so badly. . . . I want you to have your share as soon as possible."

The fire had done its work, she might have said, if not in one way, at least in another. The result was that she no longer desired to thwart the workings of law and justice, of right as she knew it. She wished to divest herself as quickly as possible of that which properly belonged to another. After all, her money had not brought her much! Why should she cling to it?

The mason was still doubtful and observed frowningly, —

"It's a mighty long time since grandfather left Alton — more 'n fifty years."

"Clark's Field has only been put on the market for a little over ten years," Adelle remarked. "They could n't do it before, as I told you."

"But it's been settled now," the mason demurred. "I don't know the law, but it must be queer if the property could hang fire all these years and be growing richer all the time."

"Alton is a big city now where the old Clark farm was," Adelle explained.

"I suppose it's growed considerable."

Then both were silent. The mason's mind was turbulent with feelings and thoughts. Across the glorious reach of land and sky before his eyes there opened a vision of radiant palaces and possessions, all that money could buy to appease the desires of a starved life.

"My folks will be some surprised," he remarked at last, with his ironical laugh.

"I suppose so," Adelle replied seriously. "You'll have to explain it to them. How many brothers and sisters have you?"

"There are five of us left," Clark said. "I'm sorry mother has gone. She would have liked mighty well having a bit of ready money for herself. She never had much of a time in her life," he added, thinking of the hard-working wife and mother who had died in poverty after struggling against odds for fifty years. "It'll mean a good deal, too, to Will and Stan, I guess; — they've got families, you know."

Adelle listened with a curious detachment to the

happiness that her magic lamp might bestow when handed over to the other branch of the family.

"Money does n't always mean so much," she remarked, with a deep realization of the platitude which so many people repeat hypocritically.

The mason looked at her skeptically out of his blue eyes. That was the sort of silly pretense the rich or well-to-do often got off for the benefit of their poorer neighbors — he read stories like that in the newspapers and magazines. But he knew that the rich usually clung to all their possessions, in spite of their expressed conviction, at times, of the inadequacy of material things to provide them with happiness. He was quite ready for his part, having experienced the other side, to run the risks of property!

"I'd like to try having all the money I want for a time!" he laughed hardly.

"I almost believe it would have been better for me if I had never heard of Clark's Field!" Adelle exclaimed, with a bitter sense of the futility of her own living. And then she told her cousin very briefly what had happened to her since she first entered the probate court and had been made a ward of the trust company.

The mason listened with interest and tried to make out, as well as he could with his meager equipment of experience in such matters and Adelle's bare statement, what had been the trouble with her life. At the end he stated his conclusion, —

"I guess it depends on what sort of stuff you've

got in you whether money agrees with you or don't. To some folks it does seem poison, like drink; but the trouble ain't with the money, perhaps, it's with them."

"I suppose so," Adelle admitted meekly. "I had no one to show me, and, anyway, I am not the right kind, I suppose. It takes a good deal of a person to spend money right and get the best out of it there is."

"Sure!" the mason replied freely; and added with a frank laugh, — "But we all want our chance to try!"

"What will you do with your money?" Adelle asked.

The young man threw back his head and drew in a long breath as if he were trying to focus in one desire all the aspirations of his thirsty soul, which now he could satisfy.

"I'll take a suite at the Palace and have the best booze money can buy!" he said with a careless laugh.

"No, don't do that!" Adelle protested earnestly, thinking of Archie. "You won't get much out of your money that way."

"I was joking," the young man laughed. "No, I don't mean to be any booze fighter. There's too much else to do."

He confessed to his new cousin some of the aspirations that had been thwarted by his present condition, — all his longing for education, experience, and, above all, the desire to be "as good as the next man,

bar none, no matter where I be," an aspiration inexplicable to Adelle, a curiously aristocratic sensitiveness to caste distinction that might not be expected in a healthy-minded laboring-man. It was the most American note in his character, and like a true American he felt sure that money would enable him to attain "equality" with the land's best.

"When I see some folks swelling around in motor-cars and spending their money in big hotels like it was dirt, and doing nothin' to earn it, and I know those who are starving or slaving every day just to live in a mean, dirty little way — why, it makes me hot in the collar. It makes me 'most an anarchist. The world's wrong the way things are divided up!" he exclaimed, forgetting that he was about to take his seat with the privileged.

"Well," Adelle mused dubiously, "now you'll have a chance to do what you want and be 'on top' as you call it."

"Mos' likely then," the mason turned on himself with an ironic laugh, "I shan't want to do one thing I think I do now!"

"I hope it won't change you," Adelle remarked quite frankly.

The quality that had first attracted her to the young man was his manly independence and ability to do good, honest, powerful work. If he should lose this vital expression of himself and his zest for action, the half of Clark's Field would scarcely pay him for the loss.

"Don't you worry about me, cousin!" he laughed back confidently. "But here we are gassin' away as if I were already a millionaire. And most likely it's nothin' more than a pipe-dream, all told."

"No, it's true!" Adelle protested.

"I'll wait to see it in the bank before I chuck my tools. I guess the lawyers will have to talk before they upset all their fine work for me," he suggested shrewdly.

"You must go to Alton right away and see the trust company. I will meet you there whenever you like—there's nothing to keep me here much longer."

" When you are feeling ready for the trip, let me know," the mason said with good feeling. "Say," he added with some confusion, "you're a good one to be sittin' there calmly talkin' to me about what I am goin' to do with your money."

"It is n't mine any longer — you must get over that idea."

"What you've always considered to be yours, anyway, and that amounts to the same thing in this world."

"I like to talk about it with you," Adelle replied simply, and with perfect sincerity, as every important statement of Adelle's was sincere. "I want you to have the money really. . . . I'm glad it is you, too."

"Thank you."

"I'll do everything I can to make it easy for you to get it soon, and that is why I will go to Alton."

The mason rose from the doorstep and walked nervously to and fro in front of the shack. At last he muttered, —

"Guess I won't say nothin' to the folks about the money until it is all settled — it might make 'em kind of anxious."

"No, that would be better," Adelle agreed.

"I'm goin' to pull out of here to-night!"

He turned as he spoke and shoved one foot through the paper wall of his home, as if he were thus symbolically shedding himself of his toilsome past. Adelle did not like this impulsive expression, she did not know why. She rose.

"Let me know your San Francisco address," she said, "and I will write you when to meet me in Alton."

"All right!"

The mason walked back with her down the hill to the grave of her little boy. He would have turned back here, but she gently encouraged him to come with her and stand beside the flower-laden grave. It seemed to her, after what he had done in risking his life to rescue the child, he had more right to be there than any one else except herself — far more than her child's own father. They stood there silently at the foot of the little mound for some minutes, until Adelle spoke in a perfectly natural voice.

"I'd have wanted him to do some real work, if he had grown up — I mean like yours, and become a strong man."

"He was a mighty nice little kid," the mason observed, remembering well the child, who had often that summer played about his staging and talked to him.

Adelle explained her scheme of treatment for the grave and the grounds about it, and they walked slowly down the path to the orangery.

"Would you like me to fix it all up as you want it?" the mason asked.

"Would you?"

"All right — I'll start in to-day and you can watch me and see if it's done right."

"But you wanted to go up to the city," Adelle suggested.

"That don't matter much — there's plenty of time," Clark replied hastily.

And in a few minutes he remarked gruffly, "Say, I don't want you to think I was goin' up to 'Frisco on a tear."

"I did n't think so!"

She realized then that Clark had not left the place all these ten days since the fire.

"I'm goin' to cut out the booze, now there's something else for excitement," he added.

"That's good!"

XLV

ADELLE registered at the Eclair Hotel in B—— with her maid. It was the only hotel that she knew in the city, although when she first crossed the ornate lobby she remembered with a sick sensation that other visit with Archie on their scandalously notorious arrival from Europe to take possession of her fortune. However, Adelle was not one to allow sentimental impressions to upset her, and signed the register carefully — "Mrs. Adelle Clark and maid, Bellevue, California." She had resolved to signify her new life by renouncing her married name here in the country where she had begun life as Adelle Clark, although her divorce was not yet even started.

She expected her cousin Tom Clark in a few days. She had thought it best to precede him and pave the way for him at the Washington Trust Company by announcing her news to the officers first. A little reflection and the memory of certain expressions from the trust officers of complacency in their success in "quieting" the Clark title had convinced her that this would be the wiser course to pursue. The trust company might find some objections to undoing all the fine legal work that they had accomplished in the settlement of the estate.

Adelle was received by the new president, that

same Mr. Solomon Smith who had delivered the trust company's ultimatum to her after her marriage. Mr. Smith, it seemed, had recently succeeded to the dignity of President West, who had retired as chairman of the company's board, fat with honor and profit. President Solomon Smith received Adelle with all the consideration due to such an old and rich client, whose business interests were still presumably considerable, although latterly she had seen fit to remove them from the cautious guardianship of the trust company. She was in mourning, he noticed, and looked much older and more of a person in every way than when it had been his official duty to deliver his solemn wigging in the Paris studio to the trust company's erring ward. Mr. Smith probably realized with satisfaction the success of his prophecies on the consequences of her rash act, which he had so eloquently pointed out. Adelle made no reference, however, to her own troubles, nor explained why she had announced herself by her maiden name. She had come on more important business.

It took her some time to make clear to the banker what the real purpose of her visit was, and when Mr. Smith realized it he summoned to the conference two other officers of the institution, who were better acquainted with the detail of the Clark estate than he was. After the thing had been put before them, the temperature in the president's office leaped upwards with astonishing rapidity on this chilly day in early May. Three more horrified gentlemen it would

have been hard to find in the entire city, whose citizens are easily horrified. For this woman, whom Fate and the Washington Trust Company had endowed with a large fortune, to try to raise the ghost of that troublesome Edward S. Clark, whom they had been at so much pains and expense to lay, seemed merely mad. When Adelle reiterated her conviction that she herself had discovered at last the heirs of the lost Edward S., President Smith demanded with some asperity whether Mrs. Davis — Mrs. Clark — understood what this meant. Adelle replied very simply that she supposed it meant the California Clarks getting at last their half of Clark's Field, which certainly belonged to them more than to her.

"Not at all!" all three gentlemen roared at her exasperatedly.

"They'd have a hard time making good their title now!" one of them remarked, with a cynical laugh.

"It would mean a lot of expensive litigation for one thing," another injected.

"Which would fall upon you," the trust president pointed out.

"But why?" Adelle asked quietly. "I should n't fight their claims."

The three gentlemen gasped, and then let forth a flood of discordant protest, which was summed up by the president's flat assertion, —

"You'd have to!"

Patiently, while his colleagues waited, he tried to make clear to Adelle in words of two syllables that

the Clark's Field Associates would be obliged to defend the titles they had given to the land, and she as majority partner in this lucrative enterprise would have to stand her share of the risk and the legal expense involved. Adelle saw that the affair was more complex than she had thought and said so, with no indication, however, of giving up her purpose.

"It is not a simple matter at all to consider the claims of these California Clarks. The land has passed out of our — your control: it has probably passed through several hands in many instances, each owner pledging his faith in the validity of his title. You can see that any action taken now by these heirs of Edward S. Clark against the present owners of Clark's Field would injure numberless innocent people. It is not to be thought of for one moment!" Having reached a moral ground for not upsetting things as they were, the president of the trust company felt more at ease and expatiated at length on "the good faith of the Washington Trust Company and all others" who had been parties to the transaction. Adelle sighed as she listened to the torrent of eloquence and realized what an upheaval her simple act of restitution would cause. It seemed to her that the law was a very peculiar institution, indeed, which prevented people from using their property for many years in order not to injure some possible heirs, and then just as stoutly prevented those heirs when they had been discovered from getting their own!

"It is simply preposterous, the whole thing," one

of the younger officers observed, rising to go about more important business.

"It's not likely to come to anything — they are poor people, these other Clarks, you said?" inquired Mr. Smith.

"I know only one of them," Adelle replied. "He was a stone mason working on my place in California. It was by accident that I learned of his relationship to me. He has some brothers and sisters living, four of them I think he said. They are all poor people. I don't know whether he has any cousins. I did n't ask him. But I think he said something once about an uncle or aunt, so it 's likely there are other heirs, too."

The trust president asked testily, —

"You did n't by any chance mention to this stone mason your belief that he was entitled to a share in his grandfather's property?"

"Yes, I did!" Adelle promptly replied. "We talked it over several times."

The three gentlemen murmured something.

"And he is coming on to see about it. I arranged to meet him here on the sixteenth, day after tomorrow."

"Here!"

Adelle nodded.

"We thought that would be the quickest way to settle it, as you know all about the property."

"The young man will have his journey for nothing," the president said grimly.

Then he took Adelle to task in the same patronizing, moral tone he had used to her on the occasion of her marriage.

"My dear young woman, you have acted in this matter very inadvisedly, very rashly!"

That was her unfortunate habit, he seemed to say, to act rashly. The irony of it all was that Adelle, who acted so rarely of her own initiative, should be exposed to this charge in the two most important instances when she had acted of her own volition and acted promptly!

"You see now how disastrous any such course as you proposed would be for you and for many others." (He was thinking chiefly of his board of directors and the gentlemen who had profited through the Clark's Field Associates, but he put it in the altruistic way.) "Fortunately, you can do no great harm to these innocent persons. The titles to Clark's Field we firmly believe are unassailable, impregnable. No court in this State would void those titles after they have once been quieted. You have merely aroused false hopes, I am afraid, and the spirit of greed in a lot of ignorant poor people, — who unless they are well advised will waste their savings in a vain attempt to get property that does n't belong to them."

His tone was both moral and reproving. He wanted her to feel that, whereas she had thought she was doing a generous and high-minded thing by communicating to this lost tribe of Clarks her knowl-

edge of their outlawed opportunity for riches, she had in reality merely made trouble for every one including herself.

"You are a woman," Mr. Solomon Smith continued severely, "and naturally ignorant of business and law. It is a pity that you did not consult some one, some strong, sensible person whose judgment you could rely on, and not fly off at a tangent on a foolish ideal! . . . By the way, where is your husband?"

"In California," Adelle replied sulkily.

She did not like Mr. Smith's tone. He knew very well that Archie was not the strong, sensible person upon whose judgment she might rely.

"Are you divorced?" the president asked, remembering that she had announced herself by her maiden name.

"No," Adelle admitted, wondering what this had to do with the business.

"Well, your husband is concerned — what does he think of it?"

"I don't know. It makes no difference what he thinks of it," Adelle replied.

"You will find that it does make a great difference," the trust officer quickly rejoined, seizing upon Archie as a convenient weapon. He thereupon discoursed upon the legal and moral rights of a husband in his wife's property and warned Adelle solemnly that she was taking a dangerous course in acting without Archie's consent. Archie doubtless

would have been much pleased. It seemed trying to Adelle, who had not the least idea of ever again waiting upon Archie's consent about anything, to have her marriage used against her in this fashion by the trust company. They had done everything they could to keep Archie's hands off the property, and now they gravely told her that it belonged to Archie as well as to herself!

Mr. Smith continued to talk for some time longer, but Adelle was calmly oblivious to what he was saying. She was thinking. It was clear to her that there were objections to the simple method by which she had expected to transfer a part of Clark's Field to its rightful owners, but she had by no means abandoned her purpose, as the trust company president thought. Like many forceful men whom President Smith very much admired, she was no great respecter of law as such. What could n't be done in one way might in another, and she must now find out that other way, which obviously she would not discover from the officers of the Washington Trust Company. So she rose and pulled on her long gloves.

"I must think it over," she remarked thoughtfully, "and see what my cousin, Mr. Clark, thinks about it. I will come in again in a few days." And with a slight nod to the assembled gentlemen she passed out of the president's private office.

Three disgusted gentlemen looked at each other after her departure. One of them said the trite and stupid and untrue thing, — "Just like a woman!"

Another reacted equally conventionally, — "She must be a little queer."

And the third — the president — vouchsafed, — "What she needs is a strong hand to keep her straight."

All of which Adelle, like any self-respecting woman, might have resented.

XLVI

ADELLE passed through the marble banking-room of the trust company, which once had been for her the acme of splendor, out upon the narrow city street in considerable puzzlement. She did not know which way to turn next, literally. She might consult some lawyer; that in fact was what the trust people had advised — that she should see their lawyers. But Adelle shrewdly concluded that it would be useless to see the Washington Trust Company's lawyers, who would doubtless tell her again in less intelligible language precisely what the trust officers had said. And she knew of no other lawyers in the city whom she might consult independently. Besides, she thought it better to see her cousin before going to the lawyers, feeling that this self-reliant, if socially inexperienced, young workman might have pertinent suggestions to offer. In the mean time, not having anything else to do immediately, she turned in the direction of her hotel.

Any of the preoccupied citizens of B —— who might have encountered this black-dressed, pale young woman sauntering up their crowded street this morning, could scarcely have divined what was going on behind those still, gray eyes. She was not thinking of the goods displayed in the shop windows,

though her eyes mechanically flitted over them, nor was she musing upon a lover, though Tom Clark often crossed her mind, nor was she considering the weather, which was puritanically raw and ruffling, nor of any other thing than how she might divest herself of a large part of that fortune which the Washington Trust Company had so meritoriously preserved for her! There was a very simple way out of her dilemma, of course, but it had never occurred to her; and if it had occurred to the trust officers, they had thought best not to suggest it to their scatter-brained client. So she knitted her brows and thought, without heeding where she was.

When she came to a certain small square, she turned off the main street unconsciously and walked up a quiet block towards the court-house. It was the path she had trod eleven years before, only in the reverse direction when she had led her aunt from Judge Orcutt's courtroom to the home of the Washington Trust Company. Her mind took charge of her without calling upon her will, as it did so often, and presently she entered the great granite court-house with no clear purpose in her mind, other than a hidden desire, perhaps, to see the probate judge once more. Judge Orcutt was not in the room on the second floor which she remembered. Instead, there was a stranger holding court there, a dull-eyed, fat gentleman with drooping black mustache and a snappy voice, who did not attract Adelle. She thought she had made a mistake in the room and

looked up and down the corridor for a room labeled with Judge Orcutt's name, but found none. Then she asked a court attendant, who told her that the judge had been retired for the last two years! Adelle was turning away, with a sense of disappointment, when it came into her mind like an inspiration — "He might still be living in the city!" She inquired, and the court attendant, who did not know, was polite enough to consult a directory and found that sure enough Judge Orcutt was living on Mountcourt Street, which happened to be not far away — in fact just over the hill from the court-house.

Thereupon, Adelle went on her way more swiftly, with a conscious purpose guiding her feet, and found Mountcourt Street — a little, quiet, by-path of a street such as exists in no other city of our famous land. It was not a rifle-shot from the court-house and the busiest centers of the city, yet it was as retired and as reposeful as if it had been forgotten ever since the previous century, when its houses were built. And in the middle of the first block, a sober, little brick house with an old white painted door and window lights, was Judge Orcutt's number. Adelle was shown to a small room in the front of the house and sat down, her heart strangely beating as if she were waiting an appointment with a lover. The house was so still! An old French clock ticked silently on the mantelpiece beneath a glass case. All the chairs and tables, even the rug, in the small room seemed like the house and the street, relics of an or-

derly, peaceful past. Adelle knew something about furniture and house decoration: it was one of the minor arts patronized by her class, and she had learned enough to talk knowingly about "periods" and "styles." Judge Orcutt's house was of no particular "period" or "style," but it was remarkably harmonious — the garment carefully chosen by a person with traditions. . . . Presently the servant came back and invited Adelle to go upstairs to the judge's library, as Judge Orcutt was not feeling well to-day, she explained.

The study was like the room below, only larger, lighter, and well filled with books. The judge was sitting near the grate, in which was burning a soft-coal fire. He smiled on Adelle's entrance and apologized for not rising.

"It's the east wind," he explained. "I've known it all my life, but it gets us old fellows, you know, on days like these!"

Adelle took his thin hand and sat down in the seat he pointed out near the fire. The judge appeared to her to be no older than he had the first time she had seen him when she went to the probate court with her aunt. Then he had seemed to her child's eyes an old man, and now he was indubitably old and rather frail, with a clean-shaven, delicately moulded chin beneath his white mustache. Adelle was in no hurry to begin on her errand. She glanced about at the cheerful room with its rows of old books, presumably the works of those poet friends to whom the judge

could now devote an uninterrupted leisure in communion. She looked at the old chairs and lounge and mahogany secretary, handed down, no doubt, from the judge's ancestors, for they antedated even the old judge. And then, through the little square panes in the windows, out to the chimney-pots on the slope of the hill, and across the harbor, with its tangle of wharves and masts, to the bay, through which the ships passed on into the ocean. She felt that it was exactly the right location for an old gentleman, who was done with the battles of life and yet wanted to remain within sight and sound of the battle-field.

The judge, noticing her roving eyes, remarked genially, — "I like to look out over the place where I have been working so many years!"

"It's nice here," Adelle replied.

There was much more in the room and the house that Adelle vaguely felt — an air of peace, of gentle and serene contemplation, that came from the man himself, who had taken what life had offered him and turned it to good in the alembic of his peculiar nature. It had been a sound and sweet life, on the whole, and this was a sweet retreat, smelling of old books and old meetings, fragrant with memories of another world, another people! This fruit of the spirit, which is all that is left from living, Adelle could now feel acutely, if she could not express it fitly in words. And she was grateful for it. She knew that at last she had come to the right place for the solution of her problem, and she did not hasten.

Neither did the judge hurry her to her errand. Evidently he recalled who she was, and his keen eyes probably read more of the secrets of those years since her last appearance in his court — extravagantly dressed, almost insolent, to listen indifferently to his severe homily upon Clark's Field — than she suspected. So they chatted for a few minutes about the view, the city, the old house, and then, as Adele still seemed tongue-tied, the judge remarked, —

"My servant gave your name as Mrs. Clark — did she not make a mistake?"

"No," Adelle said, "That is what I shall call myself now — Mrs. Adelle Clark."

The judge murmured something behind his hand. Hers was another of these modern mishaps, it seemed, falsely called marriages. Each case of divorce gave his old heart a little stab, wounding a loyalty to a beautiful ideal that he had kept intact. But he was old enough and wise enough, having judged men and women all his life, not to pronounce judgment on the most intimate and secret of all human affairs. He waited for Adelle to tell her story, and presently she began.

"Judge Orcutt," she said, "I want to tell you something and ask your advice because I feel that you will know what to do."

With this introduction she proceeded to retell her story, the one she had told that morning to the officers of the trust company. But having been over it

once she told it much better to the judge, more coherently, more fully, with many small, intimate, revealing touches that she had omitted before. It was easier for her to talk to the old man, who listened with warm, understanding eyes, and nodded his white head when she cut to the quick of things as if he understood why without being told everything precisely. She felt that she could tell him everything, all her own life, all that she was but now beginning to comprehend and see as a whole. He had for her the lure of the confessor, and Adelle needed a confessor.

So she described to him briefly the course of her married life up to the time when she first began to notice the mason at work upon the terrace wall. Without accusing Archie, she made the judge nevertheless comprehend why she no longer could bear his name. From her first meeting with her cousin she was much more detailed in her story, giving everything chronologically, anxious to omit nothing which might be of importance. She told all the circumstances of her slow comprehension of the truth, that this stone mason was her second cousin and should have inherited equally with herself the riches of Clark's Field. She told squarely of her weeks of hesitation and final decision not to reveal to the mason or to any one her knowledge of the truth. Then came the night of the fire and her personal tragedy in the ruin of Highcourt. And all this she told, dry-eyed, without passion, quite baldly, as if that was the only way in which she could face it. Lastly she told

of sending for the mason the next morning and before her husband confessing her useless secret, and then briefly she spoke of the subsequent steps that had brought her to the city to see the Washington Trust Company.

"And they told you?" queried the judge, leaning forward to poke the coal fire into flame.

"They said that nothing could be done now for these California Clarks, because it would make a lot of trouble and harm innocent people to go back of the new titles to the property," Adelle replied.

"And they were perfectly right," Judge Orcutt said, with a long sigh, after a moment of consideration. "It was the only thing they could say to you!"

He went into the law of it and explained to Adelle, more clearly than it had ever been done, just how the uncertain title had finally been "quieted," all the legal steps which had been duly taken to notify the unknown heirs, and the judicial sale ordered by the court, with the meaning of the process.

"So you can see that the law took great pains to find these people, and make sure that no wrong should be done to any rightful claimants, and because it failed to find the lost heirs there is no reason why people who bought the land in good faith should be made to suffer. You see?"

Adelle saw, but she was disappointed. It was the same thing the trust company had said to her, only now she felt sure of it. What could she say to her young cousin? That troubled her a great deal. She

hated to disappoint his expectations, which she had ignorantly aroused.

"And the law is right," the old judge mused aloud, "whatever hardship it may seem to work to these unknown heirs like your California cousins. For you must see that human life could not go on unless we cleaned the slate sometimes arbitrarily, and began all over. It is better for everybody to accept certain inexact or unjust conditions rather than to disturb the whole fabric of human society by attempting to do exact justice, which, after all, is in itself a human impossibility. That is what our good people, reformers and anarchists alike, often fail to understand! . . . So these Clarks, I am afraid, will have to suffer for the carelessness of their ancestor in not leaving his address behind him when he left for the West. No court would open up the old tangle about Clark's Field now that it has been finally adjudicated according to due process of law. No court would order the case reopened—it is *res judicata*, fixed unalterably!"

He smiled indulgently upon Adelle with his little tag of legal Latin. He might be a poet, but he knew the laws of inheritance, and moreover, now in his old age, he had come out from his valleys of indecision and knew that there must be many wrongs both legal and extra-legal in our human system, and that it was not always accomplishing the most good to try to do exact justice. As he had said to Adelle, ours is a world of chance and mistake, and the most

wholesome thing for every generation is to wipe the slate clean as far as possible and go ahead hopefully, courageously to create a new and sounder life upon a substructure possibly of fraud and injustice and cruelty. Thus man climbed always upwards. To rend and tear and fight, to try to eradicate every wrong was also human, but it was largely futile.

So when Adelle ventured to say, —

"But people often do try to upset titles, don't they? I have seen stories in the newspapers about heirs getting together to recover possession of valuable lands that have been out of the family longer than Clark's Field."

The judge nodded, and added, —

"Too true! But do you know how few of these attempts ever succeed — even get to a trial of the case? Almost none. Usually they are fraudulent schemes of rascals who collect money from gullible persons and then put the money into their own pockets and nothing whatever is done. It would be very foolish of these cousins of yours to try anything of the sort. It would make them miserable for years and eat up what little money they have. You must make this all clear to the young man who is to meet you here. Send him to me if he has any doubts!"

"What can I do about it, then?" Adelle demanded. "It belongs to them, and I want them to have it. There must be some way!"

The judge looked at the young woman with a curious, indulgent smile. He had gathered from her

story that her own experience with Clark's Field had not been a successful one by any means. Was that why she was so anxious to shoulder off upon these unknown members of her family the burden of riches which had proved too much for her? Just what was her motive? A conscience newly aroused by her terrible tragedy and hypersensitive? An interest womanwise in this young stone mason, who was the only one of the California Clarks she had yet seen? . . . The judge leaned forward and took Adelle's hand.

"Tell me, my dear," he said, "just why you want them to have your money. For of course it would be *your* money that they would get in the end, if by any possibility they could win their case."

Adelle looked into the old man's kind eyes, but did not reply. It was not easy for her to explain the persistent purpose that moved her.

"Has wealth meant so much to you? or so little?" the judge asked, thinking of his own part in providing Adelle's fortune for her.

Adelle slowly shook her head.

"Do you think that these other Clarks would use it more wisely?" And as Adelle did not reply at once he repeated, — "Have you any reason to believe that they would be happier than you have been or better?"

"Money does n't make happiness," Adelle said with a pathetic conviction of the truth of the truism. The energy of her life, it seemed, as in the case of so

many others, had been given to proving the truth of axioms one after another!

The judge smiled and released her hand. He sat back in his deep chair watching Adelle with kindly eyes. He seemed to see the woman's awakening mind slowly at work before him, struggling patiently to grasp what was still just beyond her comprehension.

"What shall I do?" she appealed finally. "Tell me!"

"There is something you can do — a very simple thing! I wonder it has not occurred to you before."

"What is it?" Adelle asked eagerly.

"You can give part of your own fortune — an exact half of it if you like — to these new cousins of yours, and so accomplish what you want without hurting any one but yourself."

"I don't think they would take the money that way — I don't believe *he* would!" Adelle said doubtfully.

"There are few persons," the judge observed indulgently, "who cannot be induced to take money in one way or another!"

"It is n't quite the same thing," Adelle said, in a disappointed tone. "I don't think he would like it that way."

"It amounts to the same thing in the end, does n't it?"

"Perhaps."

She did not tell the judge that if she should give

these California Clarks one half of the fortune she had received from Clark's Field, she should be poor, perhaps destitute.

"But before you decide to do anything, you must make up your mind very carefully, for it cannot be undone. Are you quite sure that you are doing the wisest thing in turning over such a large fortune to persons you know almost nothing about?"

"I know *him* — the mason, and I think it would be safer with him than with me."

The judge smiled enigmatically.

"If he would take it from me like that — perhaps he need not know?" she asked.

"I think that he had better know! . . . Bring him to see me when he comes and we can talk it over together, all three of us," the judge suggested.

"I will do that!"

"And now I want you to give me the pleasure of lunching with me, a very simple old man's lunch, when we can talk about other things than money!" And with another gentle smile the judge took Adelle's arm and hobbled out to the next room.

A cheerful bar of sunlight fell across the small table between the two napkins and made the old silver gleam. Adelle felt more at peace, more calmly content with life, than she had since the death of her child. She was sure that somehow it was all coming out right, not only the money from Clark's Field, but also her own troubled life, although she could not see the precise steps to be taken. As usual her

destiny, after leading her by many devious routes, brought her to the one door where she might obtain light. . . .

"Tell me," said her host in his courteous tones, "about your California — I have always wanted to go there some day."

XLVII

WHEN Adelle descended from her room to the hotel parlor to meet her cousin on his arrival, she was conscious of trepidation. However the matter might turn out in the end, she must now give the young mason a first disappointment, and she was keenly aware of what that might be to him after dreaming his dream all these weeks of freedom and power that was unexpectedly to be his. She did not like to disappoint him, even temporarily, and she also felt somewhat foolish because she had so confidently assumed that it would be a simple matter to set the Clark inheritance right.

The stone mason was sitting cornerwise on his chair in the hotel room, twirling on his thumb a new "Stetson" hat that he had purchased as part of his holiday equipment. There was nothing especially bizarre in the costume that Tom Clark had chosen. Democracy has eradicated almost everything individual or picturesque in man's attire. The standard equipment may be had in every town in the land. There remains merely the fine distinction of being well dressed against being badly dressed, and Clark was badly dressed, as any experienced eye such as Adelle's could see at a glance. Nothing he had on fitted him or became him. A very red neck

and face emerged from a high white collar, and those muscular arms that Adelle had always admired for their color of copper bronze and their free, graceful action, now merely prodded out the stiff folds of his readymade suit. His muscles seemed to resent their confinement in good clothes and played tricks like a naughty boy.

Adelle, perceiving him in his corner as soon as she entered the room, realized at once that he was out of place. It seemed that there were people, men as well as women, who were born to wear fine clothes and to acquire all the habits that went with them. For the past ten years these were the people she had associated with almost exclusively, people who could be known by their clothes. The stone mason belonged to that large fringe of the social world who must be known by something else. Adelle had recently perceived that there was another, small class of people like Judge Orcutt who could be known both by their clothes and by something finer than the clothes which they wore. Tom Clark could never become one of these.

But as soon as Adelle was seated near her cousin and talking to him, she forgot his defects of appearance — his red neck and great paws and clumsy posture. She felt once more the man — the man she had come to respect and like, who had an individuality quite independent of clothes and culture. After the first greetings Adelle was silent, and it was the mason himself who asked her bluntly, —

"Well, what did the bank say? I guess it surprised 'em some, did n't it?"

Then Adelle was obliged to tell him of her fruitless expedition to the Washington Trust Company.

"So they turned us down hard!" Clark commented, with a slight contraction of his eyebrows. "The stiffs!"

Already a sardonic grin was loosening the corners of his compressed lips. Life had in fact jested with him too often and too bitterly for him to trust its promises completely. He had no real confidence in Fortune's smiles.

"It does n't seem right," Adelle hastened to say. "But I am afraid what they said must be so, for Judge Orcutt told me it was the law."

"And who is your Judge Orcutt?" the mason demanded suspiciously.

For an instant he seemed to doubt Adelle's good faith, believed that she was trying to "double-cross" him as he would express it, having had time since they parted to realize that it was not for her own interest to admit the claims of the senior branch of the Clarks. But he could not have kept his suspicion long, for Adelle's honest, troubled eyes were plain proof of her concern for him.

"Judge Orcutt," she explained, "was the probate judge who had charge of the estate when my uncle died. He made the trust company my guardian then. I went to see him yesterday, and had a long talk with him about it all. I want you to see him,

too;—can't you go to his house with me this morning?"

"Why should I see the judge?" the mason demanded.

"He can make you understand better than I can the reasons why all the titles can't be disturbed. And there may be a way, another way of doing what we want," Adelle added hesitantly, with some confusion.

The mason looked at her closely, but he seemed to have no more suspicion than Adelle herself had had at first of what this way was. He said, —

"Well, I've got no particular objection to seeing the judge. There's plenty of time — ain't much else for me to do in these parts, now I'm here."

With another sardonic laugh for his dashed hopes, he rose jerkily, as if he was ready to go anywhere at once.

"It's rather early yet," Adelle remarked, consulting her watch. "We had better wait a little while before going to the judge."

The young man reseated himself and looked about idly at the rich ornamentation of the hotel room.

"Some class this," he observed, concerning the Eclair Hotel, which was precisely what the hotel management wanted its patrons to feel.

"Did you see your sister in Philadelphia?" Adelle asked.

"Yep," he replied non-committally. Evidently his tour of the family had not begun favorably, and

Adelle refrained from pressing the questions she had in mind.

"You have some first cousins, too, have n't you?" Adelle asked, remembering the judge's inquiry.

"A whole bunch of 'em!" the mason laughed. "Father had two brothers and one sister, and all of 'em had big families, and my mother had a lot of nephews and nieces, but they don't count for the inheritance."

In contrast with the Alton Clarks, of whom Adelle was the sole survivor, the California branch of the family had been prolific. Adelle realized that as the judge had pointed out to her, it was not simply a question of endowing one intelligent, interesting young man with a half of Clark's Field, but of parceling it out in small lots to a numerous family connection — a much less pleasant deed.

"Do you know these Clark cousins?" she asked.

"Some of 'em," the mason said. "They don't amount to much, the lot of 'em. There's only one made any stir in the world, that's Stan Clark, my uncle Samuel's son. He's in the California Legislature," he said with a certain pride. "And they tell me he's as much of a crook as they make 'em! Then there's a brother of Stan — Sol Clark. He runs a newspaper up in Fresno County, and I guess he's another little crook. There's a bunch of Clarks down in Los Angeles, in the fruit commission business — I don't know nothing about them. Oh, there's Clarks enough of our sort!" he concluded grimly.

Adelle could see that the stone mason had very slight intercourse with any of his cousins. Like most working-people he was necessarily limited in his social relations to his immediate neighbors, the relatives he could get at easily in his free hours — holidays and Sundays and after his eight hours of work was done. The mason's hands were not formed for much penmanship! Adelle also realized that the stone mason, like more prosperous people, did not love the members of his family just because they were Clarks. There was no close family bond of any sort. The mason knew less about his immediate relatives than he did about many other people in the world, and felt less close to them; and of course she knew them not even by name. She felt no great incentive to bequeath small portions of Clark's Field to these unknown little people who happened to bear the name of Clark — now that the law no longer demanded a distribution of the estate, in fact prohibited it!

Thus Adelle realized the absurdity of the family inheritance scheme by which property is preserved for the use of blood descendants of its owner, irrespective of their fitness to use it. She saw that inheritance was a mere survival of an archaic system of tribal bond, which society, through its customary inertia and timidity and general dislike for change, had preserved, — indeed, had made infinitely complex and precise by a code of property laws. She sat back in her chair, silent, puzzled and baffled by the

situation. The only way, it seemed, in which she could give the stone mason his share of his grandfather's property was by stripping herself of all her possessions for the tribe of California Clarks, which she felt no inclination to do.

Her cousin, apparently, had been following the same course of reflection in part. He observed dispassionately, —

"I don't know much about 'em, and you don't know anything at all, of course. Mos' likely they're no better and no worse than any average bunch of human beings. It's curious to think that if grandfather had kept his folks back East informed of his post-office address, all these Clarks big and little would have come in for a slice of the pie!"

"It might not have been such a big pie, then," Adelle remarked.

She remembered quite well what the judge had said about the accumulation of her fortune. It was just because these California Clarks had been lost to sight that there was any "pie" at all. If Edward S. had left his post-office address, there was no doubt that long before this Clark's Field would have been eaten up: there would have been no Adelle Clark — and no book about her and Clark's Field!

The mason tossed his hat in the air and caught it dexterously on the point of his thumb. He mused, —

"All the same they'd open their eyes some, I guess, if they knew what we know. My, would n't

it make 'em mad to think how near they'd come to some easy money!"

He laughed with relish at the ironical humor of the situation — the picture of the California Clarks running hungrily with outstretched hands to grab their piece of Clark's Field. And he laughed with a bitter perception of the underlying farce of human society. It was his ironic sense of the accidental element in life, especially in relation to property ownership and class distinctions, based on property possession, that made him an incipient anarchist, such as he had described himself to Adelle. He was far too intelligent to believe what the Sunday School taught, and the average American thinks he believes, that property and position in this world are apportioned by desert of one sort or another. He knew in the radius of his own circumscribed life too many instances where privilege was based on nothing more real than Adelle's claim to Clark's Field. In the hasty fashion of his nature he concluded intolerantly that all personal privilege was rotten, and hated — or thought he did — all those "grafters" who enjoyed what Fate had not been kind enough to give him. Adelle disliked his ironical laughter, for without knowing it she was groping towards a sounder belief about life than the anarchist's, and she felt sorry for her mistake in arousing false expectations in her cousin, because in the end it might make him all the harder, confirm him in his revolt against life. No, she must find some way out, so that

a part of her unearned fortune could be of real benefit to him.

"Tell me again," Clark demanded moodily, "just what those banker stiffs said about the title? When was it finally fixed up so as to shut us out?"

"I don't know just when, but I suppose some time before I came of age. It must have been between the time my aunt and I first went to see them and my twenty-first birthday."

Clark made a rapid calculation.

"That was about the time father died and mother and we kids were tryin' to live on nothin'. The money would have come in mighty handy then, let me tell you! . . . Well, I suppose the lawyers know what they're about."

"I suppose they do," Adelle admitted reluctantly.

"I guess they don't want no more fuss with Clark's Field — after they've got the thing all troweled out fine and smooth."

Adelle felt the cynicism in his voice, and keenly realized that it was for her benefit that the "troweling" had been skillfully performed.

"That's gone into the discard!" the mason exclaimed finally, jumping up and whistling softly.

He had that look in his blue eyes that Adelle recognized — the dangerous glint. If she were not there or if she had been a man, he would have found the shortest path to a drink, then taken another, and probably many others. Very likely that was what he meant to do to-night, but at least she would

keep him for dinner and make him take her to the theater for which she had already procured seats. Adelle did not censure him for drinking, not as she had censured Archie, because she felt that he drank in a different spirit, as an outlet for his realization of the sardonic inadequacy of life, not as a mere sensual indulgence. If the keen spirit of the man were satisfied with work, he would never drink at all, she was sure.

"I think we can go over to the judge's now," she said, observing his restlessness.

The two crossed the few blocks of city streets to the quiet corner on the hill behind the court-house where Judge Orcutt lived. The east wind had blown itself out the night before, and a beautiful May morning filled even the city with the spirit of spring.

They found the old judge up and about his study, quite lively and full of cordial welcome. He glanced keenly at the young mason, who lingered awkwardly, scowling, beside the door.

"Come in, do! . . . It's too fine a day for indoors, is n't it? I've ordered a carriage," he said almost at once, "and I want you both to take a drive with me."

XLVIII

SINCE Adelle's visit Judge Orcutt had given some hours of profound reflection to Clark's Field, for the second time in his life. Not to the legal problem suggested by the young woman's desire to upset the disposition of her property. That he had answered in the only way he could, firmly and decisively. Unscrupulous lawyers might hold out delusive hopes to these newly found heirs if they should fall into their clutches; but the probate judge knew the law of the land and the temper of the courts on this familiar topic. No, his attention had been given to Adelle herself and to her request for his advice upon what she should do with the property that had been given her in the due process of the law. He realized that he was called upon to advise again crucially in regard to Clark's Field. For he recognized Adelle's earnestness of purpose and her pathetically groping desire for light upon life.

He had already reversed that decision about her, given when Adelle upon her majority appeared in his court and he had had occasion to lecture her about the nature of the fortune he was handing over to her. Then his harsh tone had been due to a sense of futility in having been at great pains to preserve for this foolishly dressed and apparently empty-headed

young woman a very great property. To him had come then acutely the disheartening realization of the underlying irony of life, when such power and privilege could be put into such futile hands. And he — the conscientious judge — had been the instrument of the law in perpetrating this bitter jest upon justice. But now he felt that Adelle might justify her good fortune. For it seemed that her riches after poisoning her had already begun to work their own cure. She wanted to rid herself of them. That was a good sign.

Not that he sympathized in her crude plan of endowing these unknown Clark cousins with a lot of her money. He was glad that, at any rate, the law put a stop to further litigation over Clark's Field. If she wanted to distribute her estate to them she could, of course. But in all probability it would do them little good, and it might do a great deal of harm. He was interested in Adelle, in her development and her being, much more than in the Clark money. What would be best for her ultimately? If he had been a conventionally minded old gentleman, he would have urged her to bestow her money prudently upon safe charities — perhaps create a special philanthropic trust for the distribution of Clark's Field, after her death, of course, for the good of education, or hospitals, or art — the ordinary channels chosen by those rich persons who cared to alienate from themselves and their heirs a portion of their property. But the judge, fortunately, was not con-

ventionally minded, although he had sat upon the bench for upwards of forty years. He knew that philanthropy was a very wasteful and mechanical method of attaining an end, and often did great harm to everybody, because such a little charity made such an immense amount of social salve. He did not believe that "philanthropy" would appeal in its common forms to Adelle, certainly not deathbed giving.

She had been through some terrible experiences, that was evident, and was still more shaken by them than she knew. But she was young, with a long life presumably to lead, and other children and loves and interests to blossom in it. Would it not be wise for her to retain her property, now that she had learned something of the nature of money, and endeavor by herself to use Clark's Field wisely? It was here that the judge's musings brought up. He was inclined to have faith in Adelle as a person for the first time.

We can see how far from the anarchist his philosophy of life led him. The accidents of life — yes, but mysterious, not merely ironic and meaningless, accidents! Adelle Clark, the unpromising little girl, the loud, silly young married woman, was the instrument chosen by Fate — only the judge said God — sharpened by pain and sorrow to become the intelligent destiny of Clark's Field. Could the law with all its hedging and guarding beat that? Could the stone mason or the judge himself or any human mind select a better executor for Clark's Field than

the unlikely instrument which Fate had chosen? The judge thought not, and with his own little plan in mind serenely awaited the arrival of the Clark cousins on this joyous May morning, having previously ordered the horses and carriage that he commonly used for his outings.

Adelle sat beside the judge in the old-fashioned brougham, and the stone mason opposite to them, his great brown hands bedded on his knees, his face critically examining the city landscape. The judge talked chiefly to the young man, in his humorous and rather garrulous manner, describing for his benefit the glories of the old city. They plunged almost at once off the hill into a slum, where in the tall brick tenements women were hanging out of the windows enjoying the spring day. The sunshine and the blue sky made the narrow, dirty streets, and the evil-looking buildings even more out of place than usual. The young Californian wrinkled his mouth scornfully over it. But soon they drove out upon a new bridge that bound the two parts of the city together where the breeze came in across the water gayly. The mason was specially pleased with the tunnel through which the surface cars disappeared into the bowels of the city. That was some good, he said, and added that they did not have it in California. "But we don't need it yet — we are n't so crowded out there," he explained. He did not think much of the tall buildings they encountered on their

route. They had better ones in "'Frisco," and had he not seen New York? His attitude towards this home of his forefathers was mildly tolerant. If the issue had been put to him squarely, he would never have exchanged his free California inheritance for his share of Clark's Field! He seemed to think better of his grandfather for having shaken the dust of Alton from his scornful feet. That was exactly what he himself would have done if it had been his misfortune to belong to the younger branch of the family. But in that case, perhaps, he would not have had the courage to brave the unknown!

Adelle from her corner of the carriage silently followed this in her cousin's expressive face. She saw that it all seemed small to him, petty, planned on a little scale.

"Give me the Coast!" he said when at last they reached the famous Square of Alton, which was now little more than the intersection of three noisy streets, and turned up the old South Road. That simple expression meant volumes as she knew. It expressed the love of freedom, vigor, simplicity, natural manhood, the longing for the large, fresh face of Nature, where the hopeful soul of man is ready to meet his destiny by himself, unpropped by his ancestors and relatives. There was an echo in her own soul to this primitive lyric cry, — "Give me the Coast!"

(Need we explain that to the true son of California there is but one "Coast" in all the world?)

The old judge smiled sympathetically in response to the cry. Evidently he liked the young man, for he was at great pains to point out to him everything of interest and to explain certain historic monuments that they passed.

Alton had never been notable as a place of residence even in Adelle's childhood, but now it was almost completely converted to industrial uses. The stove factory had grown like a tropic plant, and had spawned about itself a number of parasitic industries, such as tack-mills, paper-box factories, and other occupations that use the labor of women and children. It was one long, smoky, grimy thoroughfare, where in a small, congested area the coarser labors of humanity were performed wholesale by a race of imported gnomes, such as might be found in any of the larger centers of the country. Alton was not one of the "show places," and it may be wondered why the judge had chosen to drive his guests thither instead of to the famous parks of the city.

But Adelle suspected something of his purpose, and more when they turned into that brick maze of small streets that had once been Clark's Field. At this the Californian's mobile face expressed frank contempt, not to say disgust. Even on this beautiful May morning, Clark's Field, with its close-packed rows of lofty tenements, its narrow, dirty alleys, and monotonous blocks of ugly brick façades, was dreary, depressing, a needless monstrosity of civilization. And all this had come about in a little over

ten years, as the judge carefully explained to the mason. It had taken less than a generation to cover Clark's Field with its load of brick and mortar, to make it into a swarming hive of mean human lives — a triumph of our day, so often boastfully celebrated in newspaper and magazine, the triumph of efficient property exploitation by the Washington Trust Company under the thin disguise of the "Clark's Field Associates"!

The judge was indefatigable in his determination to penetrate to every dreary corner, every noisome alley of the place, although the young stranger seemed to think that he had had enough at the first glance. It is not necessary for us to make the rounds of the Field for the third time with the little party. Adelle, who had a greater interest than her cousin because of her dim understanding of the judge's purpose, gazed searchingly at everything, and was able to see it differently, to comprehend it all as she had not been able to the time before when she had forced Archie to make the expedition with her. She realized now, at least in part, what Clark's Field really meant, what the magic lamp she had so carelessly rubbed for years to gratify her desires was made of. And it made her thoughtful.

About noon, when the little streets were flooded from curb to curb by a motley army of pale-faced foreign workers from the high lofts and the noisy factories, the judge's carriage drew up beside a vacant corner, the one large undeveloped bit of land

still left, nearly in the center of the whole tract. This was plastered with the signs of the realty company, seductively offering to lease it for a term of years or improve it with a building to suit tenant, etc.

"About all the open space and blue sky there is left!" the judge remarked, pointing out the figures of a few dirty children who were exploring a puddle and a pit of rubbish in the vacant lot. (These, I suppose, were the descendants of that brave body of little hoodlums of which I and my brothers were members years ago, and the puddle and pit were all that was left of our mysterious playground!)

"There's a heap of cheap foreign rubbish all around here," the mason growled, spitting contemptuously into the roadbed, as if he resented that human beings could be found forlorn enough, low enough, to labor under such conditions. "Not one of 'em looks as if he had had enough to eat or knew what a good wash was or what the earth smells like!"

No, the Coast for him, and the sooner the better, too!

The judge smiled tolerantly, observing, —

"I don't suppose they have much chance to bathe here. The city cannot afford to put up public baths and employers rarely think of those things."

"Look at the rotten stuff they eat!" The mason pointed disdainfully to the tipcarts drawn up along the curb, where men and women were chaffering over dried fish and forlorn vegetables that would

have soured the soul of old Adams, who once raised celery on this very spot. "Don't the folks in these parts eat better than that?"

"Not generally," the judge replied. "We have no public market in this city, and it is very difficult for the poorer sort to get fresh food."

"You'd oughter see the California markets!" the young man bragged.

"Tell me about them," the judge said.

And while the young mason expatiated on his land of plenty where the poor man could still enjoy his own bit of God's sunlight and fresh fruit and flowers from the earth, Adelle watched the thick stream of workers in Clark's Field, pushing and dawdling along the narrow street. There were girls with bare arms and soiled shirt-waists and black skirts, there were lean, pale boys, and women old before their time, hurrying from tenement to shop, their hearts divided between the two cares of home and livelihood. Adelle recalled one of her first talks with the stone mason, in which he had crudely told her that her yearly income represented the total wages of four or five hundred able-bodied men and women, such as these, who worked from ten to sixteen hours a day for three hundred days each year, when they could, and all told earned hardly what she drew by signing her name to slips of paper as income from her property during the same space of time. He said to her,—"You can think that you are worth about four hundred human lives! Who talks about

slavery being abolished? Hell!" She had thought then that his way of putting it was quite wrong, unjust: she was sure that Major Pound could easily have disposed of his contention. Indeed, she had heard the major and men like him maintain that capitalists like herself were the only true benefactors of humanity, that without them the working-people could never be fed! But to-day she was not sure that her cousin had been wrong. She saw a concrete proof of his statement in this stream of poorly nourished, hard-worked men, women, boys, and girls, all toiling to maintain themselves and pay her the interest upon the crowded land of Clark's Field. In a very definite sense they were all working for her; they were her slaves!

The younger women and girls looked into the judge's brougham curiously or impudently, attracted by the spectacle of leisure and quiet richness that Adelle presented, a sight not commonly afforded them in the streets of Clark's Field and always fascinating to women of any class wherever it may be. Adelle's dress was plain black, and she had shed much of her jewelry; but beneath her simple gown and fine linen and carefully cherished skin she began to feel a new sensation, not exactly pity for these less lucky sisters, rather wonder that it should all be so, that she should be sitting there in idleness and comfort and they should be tramping the pavement of Clark's Field to the factory. . . .

When she saw the boys playing in the mud pud-

dle in the one vacant lot, she thought of her own little boy, on whom she had lavished every care, every luxury. So with these working-girls, she thought how easily she might have been one of them going from the rooming-house in Church Street to shop or factory, as many women of better Puritan families than hers had done. It was pure accident, she could see, why she and her child had been saved from such a lot — due neither to her own ability nor that of any of her Clark forbears! It was a humbling perception.

"Hell!" her cousin was saying explosively, "these people are no better'n cattle. At least they ought to give 'em a trough to wash in and a place where they could buy decent food."

"A few other things, too, perhaps," the judge added with his gentle smile. "But who will do it? The city is already badly debt-ridden. The owners of the land pay so much in taxes and interest, due to the high price of the land here, that they probably make a bare eight per cent net on their investment."

He looked inquiringly at the young man.

"It's all wrong," the mason retorted heatedly, forgetting that he had hoped to become one of these "owners of the land," and returning to his incipient rebellion at the state of society in which he lived. "Somebody ought to be made to do such things."

The judge smiled finely, merely remarking in a casual tone, —

"It is a very perplexing question, all that, my young friend!"

"But you don't think it's right so," the mason persisted belligerently, thinking to challenge a supporter of things as they are.

"There's very little that is quite right in this world, my boy," the judge replied simply.

"Well, we'd better set out now to make it nearer right," the young man grumbled.

"Oh, yes, that is perfectly sound doctrine. . . . And shall we begin with Clark's Field?" he asked, turning to Adelle with one of his playful, kindly smiles.

"It needs it," she said simply.

"Yes, I think it needs it!"

"Sure!" the mason asserted resoundingly.

A little while afterwards the judge said to the driver, —

"I think that we will go home now, John."

XLIX

In these last moments something had happened to Adelle. While the judge and her cousin had been talking, she had been watching the stream of humanity flow past her, not hearing what the two were saying, listening to the voice of her own soul. It is difficult to describe in exact words the nature of Adelle's mental life. Ideas never came to her in orderly succession. They were not evolved out of other ideas, nor gathered up from obvious sources and repeated by her brain, parrotlike, as with so many of us. They came to her slowly from some reservoir of her being, came painfully, strugglingly, and often were accompanied to their birth by an inner glow of emotional illumination like the present when she saw herself and her child living the life of Clark's Field. But after they had struggled into birth, they became eternal possessions of her consciousness, never to be forgotten, or debated, or denied. She had thus slowly and painfully achieved whatever personality she had since she came for the first time a pale child into Judge Orcutt's court. If any one had talked to her about the "obligations of wealth," "social service," or "love of humanity," she would have listened with a vacant stare and replied like a child of ten. The judge seemed to know that.

It was only by idleness and Archie and unhappiness and the fire and the tragic death of her child that she had come to realize that there were other people in the world besides herself and the few who were a necessary part of herself, and that these other lives were of importance to themselves and might be almost as important to her as her own. It had taken Adelle a good many years of foolish living and reckless use of her magic lamp to get this simple understanding of life. But she was not yet twenty-six, really at the start of life. If already she had come so far along the road, what might she not reach by fifty? In such matters it is the destination alone that counts. . . .

Just now, as has been said, a greater illumination had come over her spirit than was ever there before, although for the life of her Adelle could not have expressed in words what she felt, or at this time put her new thought into concrete acts. But with Adelle acts had never been wanting when the time for them came, and her slow mind had absorbed all the necessary ideas. The judge recognized the illumination in the young woman at his side. For the first time in her life, perhaps, at least for one of the rare moments of it, her face was in no sense vacant. The wide gray eyes that looked forth upon the sordid world of Clark's Field were seeing eyes, though they did not see merely physical facts. Instead of their usual blankness or passive intelligence, they had a quality in them now of dream. And this gave

Adelle's pale face a certain rare loveliness that in human faces does not depend upon color or line or emotional vivacity. It is rather the still radiance of the inner spirit, penetrating in some inexplicable manner the physical envelope and creating a beauty far more enduring, more compelling to those who perceive it, than any other form of beauty intelligible to human eyes. The judge perceived it. As the carriage slowly retraced its way through the crowded streets of Clark's Field, he silently took the young woman's hand and held it within his own, smiling gently before him as one who understood what was too complex to put in words. He was an old man now, and it was permitted him to express thus the compulsion of Adelle's rare loveliness, thus to confide to her the sympathy of his own dreaming heart. The little ungloved hand lay within his old hand, warm and passive, not clinging, content to rest there in peace.

Thus they jogged back to the city, all three silent, occupied with personal thoughts suggested by their expedition this fine May morning into Clark's Field, which the judge for one felt had been thoroughly successful.

Judge Orcutt kept the two cousins to luncheon, and when Adelle had gone with his housekeeper to lay aside her hat and wraps, he was left alone with the young stone mason. After long years of watching human beings from the bench, the judge formed

his opinions of people rapidly and was rarely mistaken upon the essential quality of any one. He liked Tom Clark. He did not mind, as much as Adelle did, his spitting habit, for he remembered the time not more than a generation or two ago when the best American gentlemen chewed tobacco or took snuff, and he could see quality in a person who spat upon the ground, but did not conceal ugly and vile thoughts, or who abused the language of books in favor of that more enduring vernacular of the street, or who confused the table implements, or did the hundred and one other little things that are supposedly the indelible marks of an inferior culture. A most fastidious person himself, as was obvious, he looked in others for a fastidiousness of spirit rather than for a correct performance of the whims of refinement. For the one, as everybody knows but forgets, is eternal, and the other is merely transitory — the most transitory aspect of human beings, their manners. He was pleased with Tom Clark's vigorous reaction against the East in favor of his own freer land, his disgust with the incipient squalor of Clark's Field, and his honest scorn for a civilization that would permit human beings to live as they lived there and generally in the more crowded industrial centers of the world. What the stone mason had recklessly vaunted to Adelle as "anarchism," the judge recognized as a healthy reaction against unworthy human institutions, — the idiom in him of youth and hope and will. And he could under-

stand, now that he was face to face with the vigorous young man, the reason why Adelle had been drawn to the stone mason from that first time when she had discharged him from her employ. For he had those qualities of vitality, expression, initiative that the younger branch of the Clarks had exhausted. The Edward S. Clarks, transplanted fifty years and more ago to new soil, may not have risen far in the human scale in their new environment, but they had renewed there, at least in the person of this young stone mason, their capacity for health and vigor. Once more they had strong desires, will, and the courage to revolt against the settled, the safe, the formal, and the proper. Of course, this Clark was an anarchist! All strong blood must create some such anarchists, if there is to be progress in this world.

It did not seem so preposterous to the judge, after these few hours of contact with the mason, that Adelle should want to endow her cousin with a part of that fortune which but for accident and legal formality would have been his. There were, however, many other of these California Clarks, in whom Adelle could not possibly be interested and who might not be equally promising, but who would have to share her liberality with the mason. It was a delicate tangle, as the judge realized when he attempted to untie the knot.

"Mr. Clark," he began, sinking into the deep wing chair before his fireplace, "I suppose your cousin has

informed you of the results of her interview with the Washington Trust Company?"

"Yes!" the young man emitted shortly, with an inquiring grin. "She said there was nothing doing about our claim."

"The officers of the trust company were right so far as the law is concerned, as I had to tell Mrs. Clark. The law is doubtless often slow and bungling in its processes, but when it has once fully decided an issue it is very loath to open it up again, especially when, as in this case, litigation would involve hardship and injustice to a great many innocent people."

"Well, I somehow thought it might be too late," the young mason remarked, throwing himself loosely into the chair opposite the judge. After a moment of reflection he added feelingly, — "The law is an infernal contraption anyhow — it's always rigged so's the little feller gets left."

"The law rigged it so that your cousin, who was a penniless girl, got a thousand times more than her grandfather asked for his property," the judge observed with a twinkle.

"She had the luck, that's all — and we other Clarks did n't!" the young man replied.

"You can call it luck, if you like," the judge mused.

"That's what most folks would call it, I guess."

"I suppose that is what she feels, because she was anxious when she came to see me yesterday to divide her fortune with you other Clarks."

It was a daring move, and as he spoke the judge looked keenly into the young man's face.

"Did she?" Tom Clark inquired unconcernedly. "I know she's always on the square — there are n't many like her!"

"You may not know that if she should carry out her intention, she would strip herself of almost every dollar she possesses."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Her husband, I understand, conducted her affairs so badly that very nearly if not quite half the great fortune she received five years ago from her guardians has wasted away. I don't know what ultimately may be recovered from these California investments, but judging from what Mrs. Clark tells me I should say almost nothing. So that there can be left of the original estate only a little over two millions of dollars."

"Well, that's enough for any woman to worry along on," the mason grinned lightly.

"But not enough for her to pay out of it two and a half millions, which would have been the share of your grandfather's heirs."

"Hell! She ain't thinkin' of doin' that!"

"She certainly was. She would have made the proposal to you already, if I had not asked her to wait until I could advise with her again."

The young man's blue eyes opened wide in astonishment.

"What good would that do her?"

"It would give all of you California Clarks your slice of Clark's Field — how many of you are there?

"I dunno exactly — maybe twenty or twenty-five — I have n't kep' count."

"Say there are twenty-five heirs of old Edward S. living. Each of them would have a hundred thousand dollars apiece roughly. That sum of money is not to be despised even to-day."

"You bet it ain't," murmured the mason feelingly. His face settled into a scowl; and leaning forward he demanded, — "What are you drivin' at anyway, Judge?"

The judge did not answer.

"You ain't goin' to let that woman hand over all her money to a lot of little no-'count people she's never laid eyes on, just because they are called 'Clark' instead of 'Smith' or some other name?"

"You happen to be one of them," the judge observed with a laugh.

"I know that, — and I guess I'm a pretty fair sample of the whole bunch, — but I ain't takin' charity from any woman!"

The judge settled back into his chair, a satisfied little smile on his lips. The mason's reaction was better than he had dared expect.

"It ought not to be called charity, exactly," he mused.

"What is it, then? It ain't law!"

"No, it would n't be legal either," the judge admitted. "But there are things that are neither legal

nor charitable. There are," he suggested, "justice and wisdom and mercy!"

The mason could not follow such abstract thought. He looked blankly at the judge. His mind had done its best when it had rejected without hesitation the gift of Adelle's fortune because he happened to be a grandson of Edward S. Clark.

"Tell me," said the judge after a time, as if his mind had wandered to other considerations, "about these California Clarks — what do you know of them?"

The mason related for the judge's edification the scraps of family history and biography that he could recollect. Adelle, who had come into the room, listened to his story. Tom Clark might be limited in knowledge of his family as he was in education, but he was certainly literal and picturesque. He spared neither himself nor his brothers and sisters, nor his remoter cousins. The one whose career seemed to interest him most was that Stan Clark, the politician, who now represented Fresno County in the State Legislature. There was a curious mixture of pride and contempt in his feeling for this cousin, who had risen above the dead level of local obscurity.

"He thinks almighty well of himself," he concluded his portrait; "but there ain't a rottener peanut politician in the State of California, and that's sayin' some. He got into the legislater by stringin' labor, and now, of course, the S. P. owns him hide and clothes and toothpick. I hear he's bought a

block of stores in Fresno and is puttin' the dough away thick. He don't need no Clark's Field! He's got the whole people of California for his pickin's."

The judge turned to Adelle laughingly.

"Your cousin does n't seem to see any good reason why the California Clarks should be chosen for Fortune's favor."

"Ain't one of 'em," the young man asserted emphatically, "so far as I know, would know what to do with a hundred dollars, would be any better off after a couple of years if he had it. That's gospel truth — and I ain't exceptin' myself!" he added after a moment of sober reflection.

Adelle made no comment. She did not seem to be thinking along the same line as the judge and the young mason. Since the yesterday her conception of her problem had changed and grown. Adelle was living fast these days, not in the sense in which she and Archie had lived fast according to their kind, but psychologically and spiritually she was living fast. Her state of yesterday had already given place to another broader, loftier one: she was fast escaping from the purely personal out into the freedom of the impersonal.

"Allowing for Mr. Clark's natural vivacity of statement," the judge observed with an appreciative chuckle, "these California relatives of yours, so far as I can see, are pretty much like everybody else in the world, struggling along the best they can with the limitations of environment and character which

they have inherited. . . . And I am rather inclined to agree with Mr. Clark that it might be unwise to give them, most of them, any special privilege which they had n't earned for themselves over their neighbors."

"What right have they got to it anyway?" the mason demanded.

"Oh, when you go into rights, Mr. Clark," the judge retorted, "the whole thing is a hopeless muddle. None of us in a very real sense has any rights — extremely few rights, at any rate."

"Well, then, they've no good reason for havin' the money."

"I agree with you. There is no good reason why these twenty-five Clarks, more or less, should arbitrarily be selected for the favors of Clark's Field. And yet they might prove to be as good material to work upon as any other twenty-five taken at random."

Adelle looked up expectantly to the judge. She understood that his mind was thinking forward to wider reaches than his words indicated.

"But you would want to know much more about them than you do now, to study each case carefully in all its bearings, and then doubtless you would make your mistakes, with the best of judgment!"

"I don't see what you mean," the mason said.

"Nor I," said Adelle.

"Let us have some lunch first," the judge replied. "We have done a good deal this morning and need

food. Perhaps later we shall all arrive at a complete understanding."

At the close of their luncheon the judge remarked to Adelle, —

"Your cousin and I, Mrs. Clark, have talked over your idea of giving to him and his relatives what the law will not compel you to distribute of Clark's Field. He does n't seem to think well of the idea."

"It's foolish," the mason growled.

Adelle looked at him swiftly, with a little smile that was sad.

"I was afraid he would say that, Judge," she said softly.

"You know any man would! . . . I ain't never begged from a woman yet."

"The woman, it seems to me, has nothing to do with the question," the judge put in.

"And it is n't begging," Adelle protested. "It's really yours, a part of it, as much as mine, — more, perhaps."

"It's nobody's by rights, so far as I can see!" the mason retorted with his dry laugh.

"Exactly!" the judge exclaimed. "Young man, you have pronounced the one final word of wisdom on the whole situation. With that for a premise we can start safely towards a conclusion. Clark's Field does n't belong to you or to your cousin or to any of the Clarks living or dead. It belongs to itself —

to the people who live upon it, who use it, who need it to get from it their daily bread and shelter."

"But," jeered the mason, "you can't call 'em out into the street and hand each of 'em a thousand-dollar bill."

"No, and you would make a lot of trouble for everybody if you did — especially for the Alton police courts, I am afraid! But you can act as trustees for Clark's Field — " He turned to Adelle and continued whimsically, — "That's what the old Field did for you, my dear, with my assistance. Its wealth was tied up for fifty years to be let loose in your lap! You found it not such a great gift, after all, so why not pour it back upon the Field? . . . Why not make a splendid public market on that vacant lot that's still left? And put some public baths in, and a public hall for everybody's use, and a few other really permanent improvements? — which I fear the city will never feel able to do! In that way you would be giving back to Clark's Field and its real owners what properly belongs to it and to them."

So the judge's thought was out at last. It did not take Adelle long to understand it now.

"I'll do it," she said simply, as if the judge had merely voiced the struggling ideas of her own brain. "But how shall I go to work?"

"I think your cousin can show you," the judge laughed. "He has many more ideas than I should dare call my own about what society should do for

its disinherited. Suppose you talk it over with him and get his suggestions."

"My God!" the stone mason groaned enigmatically.

The sardonic smile spread over his lean face as he further explained himself, —

"It ain't exactly what I took this trip from California for."

"You did n't understand then," the judge remarked.

"And I did n't understand either," Adelle added.

"I guess I could keep you from getting into trouble with your money as well as the next man. I'd keep you out of the hands of the charity grafters anyhow!"

"I think," the judge summed up whimsically, "that you are one of the best persons in the world to advise on how to distribute the Clark millions. That is what should be done with every young anarchist — set him to work spending money on others. He would end up either in prison or among the conservatives."

"But," Adelle demurred finally, "that leaves the others — all the California Clarks — out of it for good."

"Where they belong," put in the mason.

"I'm not so sure of that," the judge added cautiously. And after further reflection he suggested, "Why should n't you two make yourselves into a little private and extra-legal Providence for these members of your family? Once, my dear," he said

to Adelle, "I did the same for you! At considerable risk to your welfare I intervened and prevented certain greedy rascals from doing your aunt and you out of Clark's Field, you remember?"

He paused to relate for Tom Clark's benefit the story of the transaction with which we are fully familiar.

"Of course, if then I had known of the existence of our young friend and his family, I should have been obliged to include him in the beneficence of my Providence. But I did n't. It was left for you, my dear, to discover him! . . . There was a time when I felt that I had played the part of Providence rashly," — he smiled upon Adelle, who recalled quite vividly the stern lecture that the court had given her when she was about to receive her fortune. "But now I feel that I did very well, indeed. In fact I am rather proud of my success as Providence to this young woman. . . . So I recommend the same rôle to you and Mr. Clark. Look up these California Clarks, study them, make up your minds what they need most, then act as wisely as you can, not merely in their behalf, but in behalf of us all, of all the people who find themselves upon this earth in the long struggle out of ignorance and misery upwards to light. . . . It will keep you busy," he concluded with his fine smile, — "busy, I think, for the better part of your two lives. But I can think of no more interesting occupation than to try to be a just and wise Providence!"

"It's some job," the mason remarked. "I don't feel sure we'd succeed in it much better than Fate."

"You will become a part of Fate," the judge said earnestly, "as we all are! Don't you see?"

"We'd better begin with Cousin Stan first," the mason shouted. "I'd like to be his fate, you bet!"

"What would you do with the Honorable Stanley Clark?" the judge asked.

"Boot him clear out of the State of California — show him up for what he is — a mean little cuss of a grafter; no friend of labor or anything else but his own pocket."

"Good! But it will take money to do that these days, a good deal of money! You will have to pay for publicity and court expenses and all the rest of it."

"Hoorah! I'd like to soak him one with his share of Clark's Field!"

"Providence blesses as well as curses," warned the old judge. "And it's chief work, I take it, is educational — to develop all that is possible from within. Remember that, sir, when you are 'soaking' Cousin Stan."

"The educational can wait until we've done some correctin'!"

They all laughed. And presently they parted. As they stood in the little front room waiting for Adelle's car to fetch her, the judge remarked with a certain solemnity, —

"Now at last I believe the fate of Clark's Field is settled. In that good old legal term, the title to the

Field, so long restless and unsettled, at last is 'quieted,' I think for good and all, humanly speaking!"

"I think so," Adelle assented, with the same dreamy look in her gray eyes that had moved the judge to take her hand that morning. "At least I see quite clearly what I must do with my share of it."

"Come and see me again before you go away, as often as you can, both of you!" the judge said as they left. "Remember that I am an old man, and my best amusement is watching Providence working out its ways with us all.' And you two are part of Providence: — come and tell me what you find!"

"We will!" they said.

After the door had swung to behind his visitors, the judge stood thoughtfully beside the window watching the cousins depart. As the young mason hopped into the car in response to Adelle's invitation, and clumsily swung the door after him with a bang, the judge smiled tenderly, murmuring to himself, —

"It's all education, and they'll educate each other!"

L

AND here we must abandon Adelle Clark and Clark's Field, not that another volume might not be written concerning her further adventures with the old Field. But that would be an altogether different story. She went back to see Judge Orcutt, not only at this time, but many times later, as long as the judge lived. So he was able to watch the idea that had sprung into being, helped by his wise sympathy, grow and bear its slow fruit to his satisfaction. In starting this chance couple upon the quest of their scattered relatives, to play the part of Providence to all the little, unknown California Clarks, and also to restore to Clark's Field its own riches, which for two generations had been unjustly hoarded for the use of one human being, the judge was doubtless doing a dangerous and revolutionary thing, according to the belief of many good people, something certainly ill befitting a retired judge of the probate courts of his staid Commonwealth! Had he not been employed for forty years of his life in expounding and upholding that absurd code of inheritance and property rights that the Anglo-Saxon peoples have preserved from their ancient tribal days in the gloomy forests of the lower Rhine? Nay, worse, was he not guilty of disrespect to the most

sacred object of worship that the race has —the holy institution of private property, aiding and abetting an anarchist in his loose views upon this subject? I will not try to defend the judge. He seemed tranquil that first day as he hobbled up his old stairs to his study, as if he felt that he had done a good day's business and was enjoying the approval of a good conscience; also, the satisfaction of insight into human nature, which is one of the rare rewards of becoming old. Nor did he worry for one moment about our heroine Adelle. He thought Adelle one of the safest persons in the universe, because she could derive good from her mistakes, and any one who can get good out of evil is the safest sort of human being to raise in this garden plot of human souls. The judge may have been more doubtful about the stone mason, but in the young man's own phrase he considered him, too, a good bet in the human lottery.

As to what they might do to each other in the course of their mutual education, the judge left that wisely to that other Providence of his fathers, sure that Adelle this time would not take such a long and painful road to wisdom as she had done in marrying Archie. But we must not mistake the judge's last foolish remark, — interpret it, at least in a merely sentimental sense, too literally. Like a poet the judge spoke in symbols of matters that cannot be phrased in any tongue precisely. He did not think of their marrying each other, because they were deeply concerned together, although I am aware that my

readers are speculating on this point already. The judge left that to Adelle and Tom Clark and Providence, and we can safely do the same thing. He set them forth on their jaunt after the stray members of the Clark tribe and other deeds with a favorable expectation that they would commit along the road only the necessary minimum of folly, and above all, sure of Adelle's destination. For at twenty-six she had passed through crude desire, through passion and pain and sorrow, and had discovered for herself the last commonplace of human thinking — that the end of life is not the "pursuit of happiness," as our materialistic forefathers put it in the Constitution they made for us, and cannot be "guaranteed" to any mortal. With that bedrock axiom of human wisdom embedded in her steadfast nature, to what heights might not the dumb Adelle, the pale, passive, inarticulate woman creature, ultimately rise?

There were many stations on her road. And first of all her husband, Archie. Adelle began to think again about Archie in the new light she had. She had not thought about him at all since she had dropped him so summarily from her life after the fire at Highcourt. She wrote him finally a considerable letter, in which she made plain the results of her thinking. It was a surprising letter, as Archie felt, not only in length, but in its point of view and its kindly tone. She seemed to see the great wrong she had ignorantly done to him. The youth she had blindly taken to gratify her green passion and to become the father

of her only child! She had ruined him, as far as any one human being can ruin another, and now she knew it. She had been the stupid means of providing him with a feast of folly, and then had abandoned him when he behaved badly. So she wrote him gently, as one who at last comprehended that mercy and forgiveness are due all those whom we harm upon our road either consciously or ignorantly, giving them evil to eat. Yet she saw the crude folly of attempting to resume their marriage in any way, and did not for once consider it. They had sinned gravely against each other and must face life anew, separately, recognizing that theirs was an irreparable mistake. So she wrote unpassionately of the legal divorce which must come. And she gave him money, promising him more as he might need it, within reason. Archie straightway put a good part of it into oil wells because every one in California was talking oil, and of course lost it all. Then Adelle sent him money to buy a nut ranch, in one of the interior valleys, and there we may leave Archie growing English walnuts fitfully. At times he felt aggrieved with Adelle, complained that he had been abused as a man who had married a rich woman and then been thrown aside when he considered himself placed for life. But also at times he had a fleeting conception of Adelle's character, realized that she was not now the girl who had married him out of hand after a mad night ride across France. She was bigger and better than he now, and he was

not really worthy of her. But these rare moments of insight usually came only when Adelle had answered favorably his pleas for more money.

One memory of her early years came back to Adelle at this time — a picture that had been dark to her then. It was when she first met her little Mexican friend at the fashionable boarding-school. She could not understand the girl's foreign name, and so the little Mexican had written it out in pencil, — "Diane Merelda," and underneath she wrote in tiny letters, — "F. de M."

"What do those mean?" Adelle had demanded, pointing to the mysterious letters.

"Fille de Marie," the little Catholic lisped, and translated, — "Daughter of the Blessed Virgin; you understand?"

Adelle had not understood then, nor had she thought of it all these years. But now the incident came back to her from its deep resting-place in her consciousness, and she understood its full meaning. She, too, was a child of God! albeit she had lived many years and done folly and suffered sorrow before she could recognize it.

And so Clark's Field had taught its last great lesson, — Clark's Field, that fifty acres of lean, level land with its crop of bricks and mortar, its heavy burden of human lives, the sacrificial altar of our economic system and our race prejudices, — Clark's Field! We pass it night and morning of all the days

of our lives, but rarely see it — see, that is, more than its bricks and mortar and empty faces. It should be called, in the quaint phrase of the judge's people, "God's Acre!" One might say that the beauty, the supreme fruit of this Clark's Field, which never blossomed into flower and fruit all these years we have been concerned with its fate, was Adelle. Just Adelle! The judge thought that was enough. Adelle would go on, he believed, growing into new wisdom, slowly acquired according to her nature, and also into tranquillity, friendship, love, and motherhood — all the eternal rewards of right living. Would she accomplish this best through that other Clark — the workman — whom she had discovered for herself? The sentimental reader probably has this already settled to his satisfaction.

But I wonder!

THE END

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